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LITTLE ONE

By Marjorie Robertson

She was the second daughter—there were three of them—and why she hadn't married long before thirty was a wonder. She was capable—well, capable was scarcely the word for it, because as Mrs Haliberd said, "All my daughters are capable, thank God", and she meant it piously. Every Sunday she went down on her knees and thanked God for the blessing of three capable daughters, and if, down the years, the thanks became a little automatic, who can blame her for that? No one can go on being spontaneously thankful, year after year, for three strong young girls, who as time went on were, after all, quite capable of being thankful for themselves. "All of them capable, but Merle, well, Merle can cook a shoulder like no one on earth, and give her a duck!" You were just left to imagine the succulent brown marvel that would emerge from the oven if you gave Merle a duck. Even when Merle was quite a tiny thing, Mrs Haliberd used to say, "And neat, well, neat's not the word for it—tidy as a brand new pin. That Elsa, now, and Doris, they're that careless if they're not kept at. . . ."

Elsa, the eldest of the three, had married at eighteen, having displayed capabilities in a direction which her mother had not suspected until the desirability of an immediate marriage became apparent. But as Mrs Haliberd explained to her God, "She's that impulsive, God dear, and that generous, but that careless. . . ." She kept this explanation for her God, because Joe Willard, looking dark and young and sulky, had taken his bride to live in the city. Elsa didn't come home to Sunshannon for a good three years, and a few months one way or the other don't matter much in three years.

Mrs Haliberd, jogging the little blue-eyed Joe on her ample lap, enjoyed having Elsa there to talk to; she didn't know when she'd enjoyed a talk with another woman as she did those talks with Elsa. "There's a lamb", she would say, and twine her thick wrinkled fingers through Joe's red gold curls, "there's a lamb . . . so like his mother. And his little nose . . ." and she pressed his fat little button of a nose until it was squashed into the wrinkled nose of a little pug dog. "His little nose is going to be put right out of joint, that's where his little nose is going to be put." A fat chuckle of delight would come from Joe and a slow indolent gurgle from Elsa. And Elsa, lying back on the cane lounge on the square of lawn under the huge old cedar-tree, would protest, "Don' make us laugh, ma, now don' make us laugh. He kicks when I laugh. You wouldn't believe how he kicks when I

laugh. Doctor says . . ." and off they would go into a long involved obstetrical discussion. Little Joe would play with the four pearl buttons down the front of Mrs Haliberd's print frock for a while and the jigging and jogging would become less and less, until Mrs Haliberd's hands rested idly on her knees and Joe slid down her plump thighs, down her large cotton-clad legs, to the grass, and away down to the fence round the cow paddock. There he would stand with his nose just resting on the lower paling watching the steady chewing of old Lily Shorthorn and the unsteady gambolling of Lily's white calf.

But having Elsa about the place again didn't do Merle any good. Merle was just twenty at the time, a thin girl with a smooth pale skin and wide light blue eyes. There was a delicacy, a nicety about Merle that none of the other Haliberds showed the faintest sign of possessing. She was the artistic one of the family; doing little bits of pottery, stencilling on curtains, painting Christmas calendars with bright little birds in vivid colours nodding at you from the centre of them. She was very proud of this talent, modestly, deprecatingly proud. A faint flush would dye her pale skin if you admired her work and her bony little hands would clasp together in front of her and she would protest, "Oh, it's just a tiny thing, just a little thing. Nothing, really nothing at all." And she would take it out of your hands with a satisfied little laugh and tuck it away in the big box she kept for her work.

She was secretary to the local solicitor in the township two miles away. She had her bicycle and every weekday morning she bicycled along the flat red ribbon of a road into Sunshannon and every evening she bicycled home again. It was very well thought of, her position. It had a certain standing, a certain dignity and tone about it, something that was hard to define. For instance, everyone knew that Jessie Barker who did the books and typing for the butcher was in a different, a lesser, world from the one inhabited by Merle Haliberd. Why, Merle was almost a lady. She might have been considered quite a lady if it hadn't been for Mrs Haliberd, who, driving into the township twice a week, leant her pink, still dimpled elbows on the greasy counter in Harrison's shop and prodded the side of bacon with her broad wrinkled fingers while she discussed the croup that had little Jimmie Harrison in its grip. "'Tis crool, poor mite. You'll have difficulty rearing that child, Maisie, you mark my words. I know the looks, delicate and pernicketty. Thank God, none of mine. . . ." And she would crack a joke with Harrison himself when he came into the shop, fat and pasty and dour, with a kind of fierce melancholy that ill

became so fat a man. As she passed him, she would flick his great paunch with the back of her hand. "This here dieting's doing you good, Joe", she would gurgle. "You're getting thin." A queer convulsion would disturb Joe Harrison, a pinkness would rise slowly up his neck into his face and every now and again during the day he would murmur to his wife "getting thin" and the convulsion would disturb him again. It was the nearest he ever came to laughter.

Well, if it hadn't been for Mrs Haliberd and Doris, the youngest of the three sisters, Merle would have been a lady. Elsa wasn't at home enough to do much damage to any lady, but Mrs Haliberd and Doris—Doris at eighteen was Mrs Haliberd over again plus seven years at the local school, with the pink freshness of youth and the sunny shine on gold curls—well, they were too much, just too much, for any girl to have attached to her and still be a lady. That Merle was so well thought of was a great triumph for Merle. It showed just how near she had come to that happy state, just how far she had risen above her disabilities.

She was going about with Matt Selby from the bank at this time and both Mr Lestrange, the solicitor, and Mrs Calbray, the bank manager's wife, were very pleased with the affair. They made such a nice neat unassuming couple; Merle with her light brown hair, that just missed being the blatant gold of her sisters', and her light wide blue eyes, her flat little figure and her carefully modulated voice, and Matt such a solid young man, such a careful young man, a man no one need be afraid of, as Mrs Calbray frequently asserted.

But it didn't do Merle any good having Elsa at home. Merle, at twenty, looked askance at the ripe fecundity of Elsa. It frightened her a little—small Joe running about the place and Elsa drifting about in the mornings in a voluminous floral gown, heavy eyed, with creamy skin and full drooping mouth, slow moving and fruitful. There was something about it all that shocked the neat refined little mind and soul of Merle. And then big Joe would come for the week-ends and stay with them. Merle would see his dark eyes watching Elsa with a kind of sullen resentment as though after three years of knowing her she was still necessary to him. Joe would leave some time in the afternoon on Sunday and after he had gone Elsa and Mrs Haliberd would sit together under the cedar-tree; they would have afternoon tea there; they would play with small Joe; and gradually they would talk, small Joe would slip away, and their voices would murmur in what to Merle was the hushed monotone of shameful tellings. If Merle came by, the monotone would sink and die and Elsa would lie there with closed eyes, limp and resting, waiting for Merle to go.

Merle didn't let Matt come to dinner the first two Sundays Elsa was home. She rode into the township after dinner and she and Matt walked in the little green park by the river and sat under the willow and read Rupert Brooke to each other with their hands lightly held together. And then she rode home again before night fell. But the third Sunday she had to let Matt come; he expected it and she couldn't explain to him how she felt about Elsa. Well, the effect Elsa had on Matt was queer. Such a quiet stolid young man. While Merle, spick and span in a pink woollen frock with woollen flowers worked by her own hands round the neck and sleeves, carved the tender brown fowl she had cooked and laughed her soft light laugh and talked quickly in her light careful little voice, he watched Elsa. Not obviously, but when she got up to give small Joe his yellow plate, Matt was ready to pull out her chair for her. And when she sat down again, Matt was ready to push her chair under her. And she looked up at him and smiled a slow weary smile as though they both understood. And Merle, watching them both, felt her face flush and heard a quivering note in her voice. Matt could have ignored Elsa, could have pretended he didn't notice.

After evening supper, she walked down to the gate with Matt, keeping well away from him, not touching him, and talking all the time, as though by talking she could keep him away from her and away from her thoughts. But at the gate, he put his arms round her in a new way, a rough way, a way that wasn't Matt. She stayed there in his arms, thin and still, and as he kissed her one hand ran over the thin curve of her hip pressing into the soft flesh, ran up and over her breasts. Then, warm and trembling, his hand was inside the neck of her dress, cupped round her small firm breast.

Merle ran back to the house; ran back with knees that trembled and a feeling of choking panic in her throat. She didn't go in to the others still sitting round the fire, but hurried into her bedroom and closed the door. She went to the window and stood there, the window flung high to the cold night air, the muslin of the curtains brushing against her with a faint swishing sigh like a distant mournful chorus. She leant against the sill, her knees still trembling, her breathing shallow and irregular, the colour flushing her cheeks and then dying away. Matt, Matt who had held her hands so lightly by the river in the park; Matt to handle her as though . . . as though. . . . Her mind shied away from the thought; shied away again and again, each time to return with a mounting indignation, an indignation that, long after she was tossing in her bed, had risen until it obscured from herself her own momentary response, her own wish to have his arms

around her again, to have that moment by the gate over again and to be more responsive for that moment.

The next morning when she came into breakfast she looked as neat and spruce as ever in her dark blue costume with a white pullover fitting snugly round her throat, but she looked tired and her mouth was a thin tight line. "It's too fat, ma. Look how fat it is." And with a grimace she pushed the bacon away from the egg to the side of her plate. And she played with her toast, breaking away from the edges the dark brown bits, eating only the pale bits from the centre. "It's burnt, Doris, it's horrible when it's burnt." And she looked reproachfully at Doris. Mrs Haliberd became genial and voluble and Merle slipped away from the breakfast table like a plaintive genteel young ghost.

"She's not like us", Mrs Haliberd said to Elsa after Merle had ridden away and they were still sitting over the breakfast table with its litter of plates on which the egg dried to a pale yellow skin with little bits of bacon fat curled in the drying mess. And Mrs Haliberd curved both hands round the big dark brown teapot, testing its warmth, stroking it, seeing her large fingers like pale shadows in its depths. "Hot enough, hot enough for one more cup." Elsa pushed her cup over the green and yellow checks of the cloth and saw the sun light up the yellow of the china. "She's not like us; she's more like yer pa. He was the tight kind, refined like and careful. Somehow he never seemed to get out of his own skin. He was a one for liking things done nice, done neat—why, you ask anyone round here who remembers him, you ask anyone and they'll tell you, he was a real little gent, so nice-spoken, so soft-spoken like. We might, if you feel like it, Els, if you don't think it would be too much for you, duckie, we might get the trap out this afternoon and take little Joe to the cemetery. It'd be nice for Joe to see where his granpa is, so neat with such a pretty headstone, just the way he would have liked it. You just go and have a rest now, duckie, get your feet up—something crool the way I used to suffer with the legs each time—you get your feet up, now, and I'll get that Doris to help me. And this afternoon we'll get the trap out. . . ."

Elsa went back to the city and the summer came again. The hot fierce sun beat down on the red ribbon of a road, the willows drooped more sadly in the little park, and the cicadas' song shrilled through the air until the ceaseless rhythm of that song was the rhythm of light, of heat, of thick dust settling from the passing footfall; until it was the very beat of the pulse of life.

Matt didn't come any more to the Haliberd place that summer. He and Merle didn't walk any more by the river and read Rupert Brooke with their hands lightly clasped. Merle didn't say very much, just with a prim hurt little smile—"I'm sorry, Matt, I suppose I'm different. I suppose I'm funny like that, but it's just—well, just that I'm like that, I suppose." And she gave a ladylike shudder of distaste. Mrs Calbray, the bank manager's wife, and Mr Lestrange were both very upset about it, especially when Matt was seen talking on the corner near the war memorial with Doris Haliberd, talking and laughing gaily just as though nothing had happened between him and Merle, just as though he liked talking with Doris there in the sun with her hair shining like newly minted gold and her mouth wide and red and glistening as she laughed. Mr Lestrange saw them there together and he went back to his rooms where Merle's smooth light head was bent earnestly over her work; and as she looked up, he saw the faint shadow of the blue veins in her forehead and the smooth pallor of her skin. He was angry with Matt, quite fierce about it, really. All that day, he saw Merle pale and frightened, with the blue veins like pale shadows on the skin of her forehead. "Coarse young brute, insensitive young rake." He told Merle to go home early, take care of herself, take this book to read, and he gave her a slim small red leather volume of "Poems that Have Helped Me". She smiled a sad small smile and went away seeing herself as he had seen her, brushed and bruised by the coarseness of life, too sensitive, too fine, too much of other clay to bear the lightest blow.

Just a few years after this, Mr Lestrange's wife died. "I've lost her, my dear", he told Merle in a tremulous voice as she stood with her hand on his shoulder to comfort him. "Lost the dear companion of my early years, the mother of my children. Death has taken her." And standing there, they both saw her like that. The fine companion ever by his side, laughing and gay with a deep understanding, a true comradeship; the mother of his children, clustering round her knee as she bent over the baby at her breast, the essence of the maternal. Merle and he both forgot the angular, acid woman, champion golfer of the district at sixty, feared at all the local charity meetings; they forgot the contempt in her eyes and voice when she spoke to her husband. They forgot that the children had all gone away years ago. They were both able to stand there and, with the help of death, to rub out truth as though it had never been and play their appointed parts of griever and comforter, using the dead woman as a prop for their emotions.

Merle became more and more necessary to him after that. That frail scene with all its false emotion was the basis of their companionship; it set the level of it. Always a dapper little figure, he became a shade more fussy about his clothes, he developed quite a dash, quite a flair for the right tie, the right buttonhole. He was a thin-faced, narrow-shouldered little man who carried himself stiffly with his shoulders straight as a board. Watching the stiffness of that slight figure, the straightness of the shoulders, you sometimes felt that if he relaxed that conscious careful carriage he would crumble away and leave just a heap of fine dead dust and a pile of good dark clothes with a black bowler hat perched on top. He had a nervous habit of pulling down his long upper lip, making his nose curve, and rubbing the tip of his nose rapidly with the knuckle of his first finger. Whenever he made a really good point, whenever he was expounding an idea and was particularly pleased with himself, down came his upper lip and up went his knuckle, and drooping his head forward he would hold Merle with his pale grey eyes, smiling an indulgent smile, and say, "And that, my dear, is something I'd like you to remember. That's something worth remembering." She would pat him on the shoulder with her pale little hand or she would put a buttonhole in his coat and just brush the flower with her lips. She gazed at him with her large blue eyes as though she drank in knowledge, as though she cared for him. And she saw the Haliberd farm retreating into a far background. His fussiness, his gentility, his precision, wrapped her round and protected her from life. And so Merle, who shrank from the young and vital, flourished in the sickly shade of this pseudo father-daughter, teacher-child companionship, while he warmed his thin dry hands at the heart of her softly-burning youth.

Mrs Haliberd didn't approve of it; she didn't approve of it at all. Oh, she knew Mr Lestrange was considered a gentleman by all in the town, she knew he had a position to be looked up to. "But it's not natural like, Elsa, that's what I say. You and Joe, now—not that I approve of carryings on, don't you think that, my girl, because I don't and never pretended to what I don't feel. But you and Joe was natural, a sight too natural, if it comes to that. But Merle, now, and her Phillip—why, he's old enough to be her father, he could 'a been her father." She sat back in her chair and a rising giggling laugh shook and shook her. "He could 'a been her father, that's if he ever strayed my way." And Mrs Haliberd and Elsa rocked with laughter at the thought of thin wrinkled precise Mr Lestrange wandering into the strange rough harbourage of Mrs Haliberd's large pink arms. They were a pair, all right, were Elsa and Mrs Haliberd; not an ounce to

choose between the two of them, frank and passionate and forthright, with an appetite for life.

It took eight years, but at the end of those years he was Merle's for the rest of his natural life. She had her nice neat precise little man with his careful dry voice, like a rustling in summer grass, and his careful choice of words, his reading of the right literature, the just-so quotations always on his lips—pat—every moment in life catered for, like a well kept grocery store, labelled parcels packed neatly on the shelves.

There had been nothing about his slow deliberate courtship that could possibly offend her. That's what made it so right for her; no coarseness, no roughness, and after all, he had breeding, he had a position in the town. He could take her away from the Haliberd place, away from that contact with life. And really, his care and affection for her, his delicacy with her, were more like a father's, a very kind and indulgent father's gentle treatment of his favourite daughter. His little blue-eyed daughter with her soft fair hair, his playfully wayward—Merle became gently, kittenishly playful with him—small daughter who must be taught, who must be instructed. What an intellect he had too, what a store of knowledge! Like a squirrel who had always known that winter would some time come. And what was his mind for but to instruct her? That was one of the joys of the companionship for him. To take out a tiny brown nut each day, to polish and polish it until it shone, and then to pop it into her mouth—no, no, not her mouth, her eager untrained fine little mind, that wonderful thirsty cluster of cells just waiting for him to feed them the right kind of food.

Gazing at herself in the mirror on the day of their marriage, Merle could almost see a look of saintliness, of other-worldliness, in her eyes. On what a plane he had placed their courtship! Her purity—she didn't exactly put it into words—but she could see it shining there in her face like some strange pale flower. It had been so sacred to him, she felt that, felt him holding his breath and treasuring her. She felt a little shamed for Matt, a little sorry for him while she was standing there looking at herself. But Phillip now, Mrs Phillip Lestrange, there was dignity in that. When he talked to her of the relationship of the sexes, as he often did in the days of their courtship, he made it sound so sane, so calm, with a place in life quite clearly defined. Something to be kept as a very special, almost religious, treat for Saturdays and holidays.

"My little one, my dear child", he said in his fine old voice when they stood together in the church after they had signed the register.

Mrs Haliberd snorted rather too audibly for tact. Phillip regretted Mrs Haliberd, just as he regretted all the Haliberds but Merle. If there had been any way of painlessly removing Mrs Haliberd and Doris and Doris's farmer husband and Doris's first born little girl from the district he would gladly have taken it.

But they didn't have to see too much of each other. Phillip had his house on the far side of the town, the residential district, and Mrs Haliberd's farm was two miles out on the other side. The few times she did pop in, "Just to see you, Merle, my pet, just to see how you was getting on", there was a feeling of not being welcome, a feeling of restraint. No nice homely chat; no flushed laughter as there was with Elsa; no, nothing like that. And the house irked her. It somehow smelt of age. It was cluttered with the finicking possessions of one who had dealt all his life with small things, with little issues. And Merle in the midst of them was more restrained, more ladylike than ever, tending her possessions and her Phillip like some serious young priestess tending the lamps of her temple.

But there was no doubt Merle seemed to like it. She seemed to flourish in that still atmosphere. She soon was on every committee in the town; running this; chairwoman of that; well-dressed, well-groomed, her fair neat head held proudly, arrogantly. "Send them", she would say to Mrs Harrison with one gloved hand impatiently tapping the counter in the general store, "send them all to Mrs Phillip Lestrange", and she would nod vaguely at Harrison as she went out as though she might, perhaps, have seen him before. Her voice, always light in quality, became brittle and definite, almost arbitrary, except when she was with Phillip; and then it was deferential, playfully deferential. If she didn't like the solemn methodical ritual of their Saturday nights, the faint mystical aura that gathered round him about nine o'clock as round a high priest approaching the sacrificial altar—"my little one, my child, my little white lily", and the dry hand, brown and shrunk, cold and dry and dead, passing over her warm soft flesh—well, if she didn't like it, no one knew. No one, except perhaps herself, ever knew that the pinched lines that gathered round her mouth and the nervous shrillness that gathered in her voice whenever she was angered were due to an increasing apprehension of those nights. Even a priestess must sometimes tire of filling the lamps with oil.

"Her pa was like that, refined like. He would 'a been more like it, if it hadn't been for me", Mrs Haliberd said with a wide charity to Elsa on one of Elsa's holiday visits. But Elsa shrugged her shoulders

—a magnificent figure of a woman Elsa had become—and dismissed Merle. To her, Merle was puny and to be dismissed.

But the dog was what really finished it as far as the Haliberd family was concerned. The dog was the last straw. The dog somehow put the stamp of the lady on Merle and cut her off from the Haliberds as nothing else had ever done.

Mrs Haliberd had driven into town, picking up Doris and her youngest boy on the way, and over a cup of coffee in the Snuggery—the town really was coming on—she decided they must all see Merle. "I was going anyhow. It's her birthday and I've never forgot one of you on your birthdays yet, and I'm not going to now. It's not for me to be the one to forget. So come on, drink up your coffee—go on, Johnny, my duck, eat your ice cream, and we'll drive out. I've got a chicken in the trap, plucked and all, and a cake of my own baking. Not that she can't bake a cake better than the next one; but there, I felt I'd like to have something made with my own hands."

So out they went. And there on a cushion on the very best chair, the one upholstered in the plum brocade, was the dog—if you could call it a dog. A little golden coloured animal with large mournful brown eyes and a squashed disdainful little face. He lifted a weary head from his cushion and gazed at them with unveiled distaste, and then the tiny golden head, too tired to hold itself erect any longer, dropped back on the cushion. And Merle drooped over him, cooed and chuckled and stroked him.

"Phillip gave him to me. He's very rare, very delicate, is mother's little lamb." And she slid her fingers softly under the dog's chin and the sad dark eyes gazed into hers. "Such a darling. If he's good, very good, we'll tie a ribbon round his neck, a nice new blue ribbon, for his grandmother to see. And we'll leave it on until tonight." And she gathered him, cushion and all, on to her lap. Mrs Haliberd snorted and Doris sat stiff and plump and uncomfortable on the edge of the big soft sofa, her handbag held tightly in her lap, her eyes wandering round the room, noting and remembering the furniture, the flowers, the heaped greenery in the fireplace, the ornaments, all the little ornaments.

The plucked chicken lay on its paper on the table where Merle had unwrapped it when she opened it, and the cake still stayed in its tin beside the nakedness of the chicken. Johnny wandered about the room, touching little ashtrays, little black elephants walking in a row across the table top, three carved monkeys sitting on top of the wireless joined together for ever by their maker. And when he came to the

table with the chicken lying on it, he played with the stiff dark legs, trying to bend them, trying to make them walk. Mrs Haliberd talked. Mrs Haliberd always talked. But it was an uncomfortable stream, as though it ran over unseen boulders. Merle would answer, "Yes, oh yes, mother." She had long ago given up calling her "ma". Or, "Really? Oh, really, mother", in an abstracted voice, and then excitedly, interestedly, "But look! Look, mother! Look, Doris! Isn't he a lamb? Look at that expression now. Have you ever seen anything like it?" And with a high little laugh she would lift the golden scrap and bury her face in its soft indifferent neck.

"Well! Well, now!" said Mrs Haliberd in the trap going home, flicking the horse with her whip. "Well, it might 'a been a baby he'd given her, it just might a' been a baby. Sit still, you Johnny there, sit still, or you'll be out on your head and no more use to anyone ever again—no more 'n a fat little dog with a squashed face."

BEACH BURIAL

Softly and humbly to the Gulf of Arabs
The convoys of dead sailors come;
At night they sway and wander in the waters far under,
But morning rolls them in the foam.

Between the sob and clubbing of the gunfire
Someone, it seems, has time for this,
To pluck them from the shallows and bury them in burrows
And tread the sand upon their nakedness;

And each cross, the driven stake of tidewood,
Bears the last signature of men,
Written with such perplexity, with such bewildered pity,
The words choke as they begin—

"Unknown seaman"—the ghostly pencil
Wavers and fades, the purple drips,
The breath of the wet season has washed their inscriptions
As blue as drowned men's lips,

Dead seamen, gone in search of the same landfall,
Whether as enemies they fought,
Or fought with us, or neither; the sand joins them together,
Enlisted on the other front.

El Alamein, 1942. KENNETH SLESSOR.

JOSEPH FURPHY AND "TOM COLLINS"

By H. J. Oliver

The republication, by Angus and Robertson Limited, of *Such is Life* has made Joseph Furphy, thirty-two years after his death, "the man of the hour". The first edition of the book (1903) sold very slowly; and *Such is Life* might even have been forgotten had it not been for a few of Furphy's friends and the historians and critics of Australian literature who kept on telling us of the neglected classic.* Such champions of Furphy would not wish him any less than his due; but there is a real danger that some of their statements might even stand in the way of his further popularity.

There is, for example, the tradition that *Such is Life* lacks form. The standard *Outline of Australian Literature* advances the view that Furphy's novel is a "great almost formless slab of outback experience and fireside yarns", in which the events of certain days are "bolted loosely together"; and the writer of an otherwise admirable account of the book on the Red Page of the *Bulletin* (July 26, 1944) goes so far as to say that "Tom Collins knew or cared so little about the technique of writing that the reader must develop a technique of reading him".

This is the view of his talents that Tom Collins would seem to advance himself. He tells us at the very beginning that "a peculiar defect—which I scarcely like to call an oversight in mental construction—shuts me out from the flowery pathway of the romancer", but claims to have "the more sterling, if less ornamental qualities of the chronicler", namely, "an intuition which reads men like signboards; a limpid veracity; and a memory which habitually stereotypes all impressions except those relating to personal injuries". It is not long before we begin to see that this is the very opposite of the truth; some of the fun of the book comes, for example, from Collins's failure to interpret properly the facts that a careful reader has put together for himself—for instance, his misinterpretation to Stewart (in Chapter IV) of the life-story of Warrigal Alf. The reader who is not quick to pick up stray hints will naturally miss this fun—and much else in a particularly subtle book.

No one, then, can afford to take seriously Collins's claim that he has before him a number of diaries, one of which he picks with his eyes shut and opens "at random". Added pleasure now comes from

* *Such is Life* was re-issued in 1917 by Miss Kate Baker; an abridged edition prepared by Vance Palmer was published by Jonathan Cape in 1937.

the change of plan after the first chapter. Collins has announced that he will take one week from his diary and begins with September 9; then he decides that he cannot possibly get into "anything like printable form" the dialogue of the sheep drovers with whom he spent September 10, and therefore decides that he will instead take the 9th of each consecutive month "for amplification and comment":

> The thread of narrative being thus purposely broken, no one of these short and simple analyses can have any connection with another—a point on which I congratulate the judicious reader and the no less judicious writer; for the former is thereby tacitly warned against any expectation of plot or denouement, and so secured against disappointment, whilst the latter is relieved from the (to him) impossible task of investing prosaic people with romance, and a generally haphazard economy with poetical justice.

A brief summary of the action will perhaps best indicate how deliberately—and skilfully—the book has been planned and will show why the diary-form, in the words of R. G. Howarth,* is only "a blind".

In Chapter I we meet a number of bullockies, including Cooper, who was "an entire stranger" to Collins. And by page 6 we have also met Warrigal Alf—these two being the characters on whom the whole novel pivots. In the natural course of the evening's discussion, Cooper tells the story of his sister Molly, whose lover left her when her face was disfigured by the kick of a horse. We learn that Molly disappeared from her home on the Hawkesbury and has not been heard of since, but that she would be about thirty-five if she were now alive; and we hear of the lover's marriage with a woman "out o' the lowest pub. for ten mile round", of their one son, of the wife's unfaithfulness and the husband's decision to leave her.

Chapter II introduces us to Rory O'Halloran and his daughter Mary—a thread to be caught up in Chapter V, when we hear from one of the bullockies the story of Mary's death. Chapter III tells the famous tale of how Collins lost his pants and narrowly escaped being arrested for the burning of a hay-stack—this thread being caught up in the final chapter when we hear that poor Andrew Glover the swagman served three months for Collins's "offence". These stories are also linked to the main one in other ways; as Collins says, "Sometimes an under-current of plot, running parallel with the main action, emerges from its murky depths, and causes a transient eddy in the interminable stream of events."

In Chapter IV Collins comes to the rescue of Warrigal Alf, seriously ill and in his delirium hearing the voice of a woman dead ten years and "silent to me for three years before that". He tells

* *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 8, 1944.

Collins that he once lived on the Hawkesbury, but left the district when he found his wife unfaithful. He adds too that he regards his marriage as his punishment for "one deliberately fiendish and heartless action" and that his only son's death has added to the punishment; and as we leave him in his delirium we hear the name Molly. All of this Collins misinterprets when telling the story to Stewart of Kooltopa, who is able to fill in some additional information about Warrigal Alf.

In Chapter VI, after Collins has warned us that he cannot tell a love story, we hear of a lonely boundary-rider, Nosey Alf, who has a beautiful voice but won't sing when women are near; whose hut is a model of cleanliness and even adorned with flowers; who has a "rippling laugh" and "tapers the wrong way"; and whose face is disfigured but "more beautiful, otherwise, than a man's face is justified in being". To this Nosey Alf, Collins tells the story of Warrigal Alf, as he misunderstood it; and he is surprised when Nosey Alf is affected by the information that Warrigal Alf is a widower and is now in Western Queensland. In Chapter VII, we hear that Nosey Alf has lately been seen "sixty or eighty mile beyond the Darling", heading north.

The diary form, then, has been used so that, without any artificial rounding-off, incidents may be connected to give the narrative what Furphy calls its "peculiar scythe-sweep". We do leave stories and return to them; but that is because Furphy likes to go round an incident and see it from all sides. A. K. Thomson, in an excellent article on "The Greatness of Joseph Furphy" in *Meanjin Papers* (Spring, 1943), has compared the method with that of Browning in *The Ring and the Book*. A better comparison might be with Conrad. Both Conrad and Furphy could so easily have told mere thrilling tales of adventure; both elected to fill in the details and let us see each incident "whole". And Furphy uses Collins much as Conrad uses Marlow, not only to gather the facts but also to guarantee them. (Furphy uses that word early in *Rigby's Romance* in speaking of his general method: "These details are nothing to do with my record; they are presented merely as a spontaneous evidence and guarantee of that fidelity to fact which I acquired early in life, per medium of an old stirrup leather, kept for the purpose." He makes a joke of his virtues, as of nearly everything else.) There are, of course, differences between Furphy's methods and Conrad's. The main one is that in *Such is Life* a greater proportion of the space is devoted to the adventures of the narrator. This may well be defended, however, for Furphy needs to establish the character of Collins very carefully, since

his narrator is not only to interpret the enclosed story for us: he is also to misinterpret it.

Let any reader who still thinks that *Such is Life* is formless, study the way in which we are quietly led up to that superb story of Rory's lost child, and then led away from it to other similar stories, so that the author's reflections when they do come will not seem bathetic. I know of none of our literary "craftsmen" who could have handled this problem of technique so well. One may apply to Furphy what G. K. Chesterton said of Thackeray: "His rambling was all strategy; for it is the very triumph of strategy to look like rambling. His artlessness was precisely his art."

If there is little justification for the charge of formlessness, there is still less for that of inability to handle words. Even A. G. Stephens, in the Preface to *Rigby's Romance,* speaks of Furphy's style as "ponderous"; I have heard it described in a lecture as "awful"; and Kylie Tennant finds it "indigestible" and thinks Furphy a "literary snob".* The test can only be whether the exact effects Furphy desired could have been obtained in any other way; I think they could not. For it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that Furphy had an excellent *dramatic* sense, and he keeps his so-called "ponderous" style for the character "Tom Collins"; he seldom, if ever, superimposes it on the dialogue of the other characters. Those who have read the common criticisms of his style before reading the novels must get a pleasant surprise when early in *Such is Life* they come across Cooper's account of his upbringing, or when they read in *Rigby's Romance* Dixon's version of the story of Moses or his account of how, having read *Jane Eyre* not wisely but too well, he tried Mr Rochester's tactics in an attempt to win the affections of a lady school-teacher; and they must have great difficulty finding anything ponderous or wordy in a typical piece of dialogue like:

"Morning, Collins. Jefferson Rigby's a friend of yours, ain't he? Any idea where he is?"

"Up the river, I believe—so Mrs Ferguson tells me. I expect to see him to-night."

"Couple of ladies came to the post-office yesterday hunting him up. We sent them to Mrs Ferguson. So they'll be right. Horses looking a bit hairy on it."

"Season's telling on them."

"Grand dog."

"Middling."

"So long."

"So long."

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* *Meanjin Papers,* Spring, 1942.

One must add, of course, that some of the finest humour in the novels comes from the very contrast between the pedantic speech of Collins and the adjectival language of the bullockies. (Incidentally, I hope the *A.B.C. Weekly** misrepresents Furphy's biographer, Miles Franklin, when it reports her as saying that Tom Collins "pretends to write from a diary *as one of the bullock drivers*"!) I can remember nothing in Australian literature funnier than Collins's account of the ex-sailor's version of the perfect saddle—unless it be Collins's version of the ex-sailor's account of the hunger of the man-o'-war hawk. Remove the "pedantic" style and you remove the contrasts on which the book depends for many of its finest effects; you do away with every passage like this:

> Sollicker . . . proceeded with great deliberation to interpret his oracular utterance; but first, with a powerful facial exertion, he wrenched his mouth and nose to one side, inhaling vigorously through the lee nostril, then cleared his throat with the sound of a strongly-driven wood-rasp catching on an old nail, and sent the result whirling from his mouth at a butterfly on a stem of lignum—sent it with such an accurate calculation of the distance of his object, the trajectory of his missile, and the pace of his horse, that the mucous disc smote the ornamental insect fair on the back, laying it out, never to rise again.

Are we to understand that Furphy would have been a finer writer had he remarked merely that Sollicker spat?

Perhaps critics have devoted rather too much of their time to Furphy's beliefs and to his place in the Australian democratic tradition. (Vance Palmer certainly took an unnecessary risk when he put into the mouth of Tom Collins in a broadcast the sentiments that Collins attributes to Rigby.) But Furphy's technique will obviously repay further study. He is not to be patronised. Bernard O'Dowd was probably quite right when, in 1916, he called *Such is Life* "on the whole our finest production of prose literature up to the present".

[Mr. H. M. Green, as author of the *Outline of Australian Literature*, comments:

After reading Mr. Oliver's very interesting article, may I say that some years ago I came to the conclusion that I had been quite wrong; that there was very much more organization in *Such is Life* than Furphy made out? I have said this in lectures a number of times, and given reasons.

On Mr. Oliver's other point, however, I hold to the opinion expressed in my *Outline* that Furphy's general style is "more than bookish . . . it is ponderous, almost pompous", but that "this style is not allowed to affect the conversation of anybody but Tom Collins". Only now I would go a little further, and say "is seldom allowed to affect, etc."]

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* September 4, 1943.

FIGURE IN CLAY

(A Village Blacksmith)

He was in most respects like Chaucer's Miller,
But add to that he was a lady-killer
Who served one-half the town and set sighing
The other half for the heaven of such dying.
No sickly lecher, but a great thrust
Of a man whose laugh went level with his lust.
No setter of snares and about-the-bush beater,
But a forthright hunter and a good eater
Of all the game he got. No Dapper Dan
But a great, deep-chested, bearded, blue-eyed man
Whose clothes smelled of the forge-smoke and the rust
Of iron and the mingled earth-sweat dust
Of horses, and the shavings of bright steel.
Whose fingers knew the hammer and the feel
Of an iron tire snug against the wood
Of waggon-wheel. A laughing man who stood
So proudly and so strongly on his feet,
Women, in this Haarem of the Incomplete,
Could not but find his their-ward bending sweet.

And I who knew him could have let it go
At that and mightily enjoyed the show
Of so much force-of-life, so clean a spurt
Of being, like a hose turned on the dirt
That drifts on walks and cushions down the sound
Of footsteps till the whole world is drowned
In one great silence though a thousand walk.
I could have thought of him as the tough stalk
Of what might be a nettle or a rose
As God would have him, or as just I chose,
Or let him be, a modern Chaucer's Miller
Promoted one step to a lady-killer.

But then I learned the thing that would not fit
My pattern of him though I'd fashioned it
With what I thought was wisdom, moulding clay
Into his image and feeling that the day
Was coming when I'd know him to the bone
And dare to cut the figure out in stone.

Once every month, always a Saturday,
The blacksmith shop was closed with "Gone away,
Be back on Monday", scrawled across the door.
The wise ones winked: "You know what he's gone for
Two hundred miles to Melbourne. She must be
A wonder."

That was good enough for me,
That easy comment of the easy mind,
Until I heard this thing that struck me blind:

A local lad, the son of butcher Snell,
Went off to Melbourne for a little spell
And some chance education on the side.
The city left him scared and stupefied
And he sought out, as country people do,
The blessed sanctuary of the Zoo,
But had the wrong car number in his head
And landed in a cemetery instead.

He didn't mind at all. The funeral-goers
Stood here and there in groups, heads bent like sowers
In Bible pictures. Their unhindered tears
Put out the burning of his city-fears,
And joining them, although too gay his dress,
He lost in theirs his own great loneliness,
Sang hymns with them, and prayed, and took his share
Of all their hearts, for grief has love to spare
For what is lonely, beaten and afraid.
The last hymn sung, the final prayer prayed,
He thanked his childhood's God for this good bread
Though eaten at the table of the dead,
And turned away with courage bright and new
To find the tram that did go to the Zoo.

That's when he saw the blacksmith standing there
Watching the coffin lowered with a stare
Awful in those blue eyes, a stare almost
As if he looked upon the Holy Ghost
Or saw some devil rising out of hell—
Though which it was a fellow couldn't tell.
Right by the grave he stood, erect, alone,
As though his flesh were turned to very stone
And he would never move from there. Wait,
Thought David Snell, or meet him at the gate;
One respects grief like that.

There was no meeting
At any gate, no hand-clasp and no greeting.

For suddenly the blacksmith seemed to shake
Free of his trance and David saw him take
A handful of fresh earth and let it fall
Gently, and then, as though he heard a call,
Turn and walk briskly twenty yards to where
Another funeral group stood hushed in prayer.

A country lad will never fail to pry
Into a log although a snake may lie
Coiled in that darkness. David joined the crowd.
The blacksmith stood beside the grave unbowed,
The great stare in his eyes and in his hand
A bit of earth.

So David saw him stand
Beside four graves, and, far as David knew,
He went on funeraling the whole day through;
For David had seen all he cared to see
And felt right then like sandwiches and tea
And after that, if he could only find
The tram, there was the Zoo.

That made me blind,
That story, where I saw so clearly then
When he was simply one of Chaucer's men,
The heavy-shouldered, armor-headed Miller
Become a blacksmith and a lady-killer,
A luster and a laugher—but who gave
Or found—what was it?—only in a grave!

He was so nearly ready for the stone!
But since I seek his truth, and that alone,
And since his truth is not for me to say,
I'd better throw more water on my clay!

ERNEST G. MOLL.

Good Friday's sun is westering
In seas of autumn gold,
And soon comes on the Antarctic night,
The long dark and the cold,

The longer pain, the killing pain—
For me no Easter Day
Will shine across the lilies
Its heart-surprising ray.

Ah, love is death when faith is gone—
I kissed as I betrayed;
And my Lord is taken away
And I know not where He is laid.

NAN MCDONALD.

"LET'S TALK OF GRAVES ... ."

By R. G. Howarth

> Ask you what circumstance provokes his hate?
> The strong antipathy of small to great.

Robert Graves's opinion of Milton is already well known: "monstrous Milton" he styled him in some alleged Skeltonics lauding Skelton. It is therefore with some feeling of doubt that one marks his claim, in the foreword to *The Story of Marie Powell, Wife to Mr. Milton*:* "I have tried to answer all the outstanding questions plausibly and fairly in the course of the narrative." And that doubt is confirmed by the "advertisement" on the back of the dust-cover, part of which runs: "Here is a sympathetic and live reconstruction, from hints and fragments, of a story that critics and schoolmasters have never dared to be quite honest about. Readers in whose ears the name 'Milton' has a nightmare ring, like a school-bell chiming insistently in the early morning, are promised a marvellous sense of relief once they have read Mr. Graves's version of what really happened." We are, then, to be told the plain truth (according to Graves) about Milton, and know him for the monster he was. We shall consequently be no longer under any compulsion to study his works.

As the means of attack, Graves chooses to breathe his own sour spirit through the mouth of one whom he cannot but portray as a froward wife. Now of Mary Powell we know very little else indeed. The facts of her relationship with Milton are these:† she came of a potentially Royalist family; Milton married her in June, 1642, a month after their meeting; "having been used to a great House, and much Company and Joviality", she did not relish "a Philosophic life" with her husband in London; therefore within two months he allowed her to visit her parents; she did not return to him as agreed; having met with contempt and a final rebuff from her family (who, it is suggested, began to repent having matched their eldest daughter with a notable Puritan) and being convinced that the marriage was a mistake, Milton decided to have nothing more to do with her; he "forthwith prepared to Fortify himself with Arguments for such a Resolution", the result being his two treatises of divorce, the first of which was published on August 1, 1643; failing legitimate relief

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* Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1943.

† See *The Early Lives of Milton*, Edited by Helen Darbishire, 1932; "Milton's First Marriage", by B. A. Wright (*Modern Language Review*, October, 1931, January, 1932).

he proposed on his own responsibility to take a second wife; in distress for subsistence Mary returned to him, and he not only took her back but even received into his own house her numerous relatives, now ruined in the Civil War; she bore him four children and died in 1652 after the birth of the fourth. An impartial examiner of this record would feel sympathy for Milton and give him credit for justness and even generosity. The references in his divorce pamphlets and *Paradise Lost* to unsuitable and erring wives are necessarily to be taken as made to his own situation, yet the reform of the divorce laws which he sought to bring about, while it would have enabled him to form a happier alliance, was desired for the general good.

In domestic questions, as in others, there are, of course, two sides, and it may be that Mary had legitimate cause of complaint against John; but, even if so, Graves is hardly the one to voice it. Through Mary's eyes he views Milton as, from the outset of their acquaintance, a stern, harsh, proud, humourless precisian (basilikist Dr. Johnson's "acrimonious and surly Republican"), whereas in reality, as the testimony of his friends and relatives shows, Milton was a delightful companion as well as a cultivated gentleman, a lover of virtue above all but a lover of music and social intercourse and every other virtuous enjoyment also. Thus Aubrey notes that he was "of a very cheerfull humour . . . he would be chearfull even in his Gowte-fitts; & sing", "extreme pleasant in his conversation, & at dinner, supper &c: but Satyricall". Towards women he may have comported himself more "Satyrically" than "pleasantly". That he did not understand women is clear enough. He seems to have made an effort to bring Mary up to masculine level of intellect. It is noteworthy that his daughter Deborah, who is believed to have suffered "mental cruelty" from him, later bore him no ill-will and even spoke of him admiringly.

Graves also presses while appearing to deny Belloc's falsehood that Milton coerced Mary as his debtor's daughter into marrying him (page 207: "I had consented, upon an urgent motion from my parents, to wed Mr. Milton, to whom my father owed a great sum of money"), and he invents a repulsive story to lend colour to his wish to persuade us that the estrangement between husband and wife occurred on the marriage-night. The story is not only repulsive: it is also so fantastically implausible as to be almost ridiculous. Only the mind of a Graves could have conceived it, and it is well that he cannot resist overdoing the details of the fabrication, thus cheating himself of his abhorrent effect.

At home in London, Milton is made to appear a domestic tyrant and a cruel master to the nephews he was teaching. Now there can be

no question that in applying the rod Milton was simply following the admonition of Solomon, and in an age which (retrospectively) felt gratitude to Dr. Busby of Westminster School for the whipping-cheer with which his establishment abounded, Milton's discipline can hardly have been excessive. He was above all a just man and, according to the notions of his time, acted without cruelty. Each of his two nephews repaid him by writing an appreciative memoir.

The other main charges Graves brings against Milton are: of avoiding military service (as though by placing his talents at the disposal of the Commonwealth he was not offering the best service he could perform!); of assisting, after the issue of his *Areopagitica*, in the suppression of free publication (a statement for which I can find no warrant); of changing an opinion in the course of five years (!); the old one (discounted by Smart) of fraudulently inserting a prayer from the *Arcadia* in *Eikon Basilike*, and then rating the King as putative author for lack of originality; last—most monstrous!—of murdering his wife. If it were possible to take action for slander on behalf of the dead, then, in the name of Milton, Graves as the author of this last unwarranted and infamous calumny should be prosecuted. Following seventeenth-century custom, Mary regularly produced children. It is only from our twentieth-century notion of family limitation that we can condemn the practice. After the birth of her third child, Mary and Milton (as Graves would have it) were warned that she must bear no more or she would die. Nevertheless (*Graves auctore*) he came in unto her, and she conceived, bore and died. Now since, as Milton's own record, cited here in an "Epilogue", shows, Mary did not die till three days after giving birth to a daughter who lived to reach maturity, it is apparent that Mary succumbed to something like the usual child-bed fever. Had there been any danger in her bearing a child, she would surely not have survived her labour.

Graves's invention—it seems to be such—of a romance between Mary and Sir Edmund ("Mun") Verney is no doubt designed to draw additional sympathy towards her as one tied to an incompatible and overbearing mate. We may concede Graves his little bit of sentiment.

Criticism of the mode of narration is invited, especially by the use of the old device of the journal confidant, but it seems hardly worth while. Graves makes Mary attempt—beyond her and his own strength—to compass all the public events of the time as they occurred. Indeed, contrary to all accounts, Mary appears here as intelligent, educated and thoughtful above the average, with an extraordinary

understanding of both men and books—a younger sister, as it were, to Lucy Hutchinson. The explanation of course is that Graves could depress Milton only by exalting Mary.

The Story of Marie Powell is monstrously unfair: indeed, to those who study the facts it is scarcely ever even plausible.

THE DIE-HARDS

Jack Grigett and John Ciggler
are risen from the Yerd
to stage the toughest trilling match
the Greenwood ever heard.

John Ciggler takes his tambourine
to swing upon the spray. . . .
Shall any jigging jackanapes
outjingle me? Fie, nay!

Jack Grigett has his fiddle out:
he thrums it with his thigh. . . .
Shall a tzigany strumble-bug
outfiddle me? Nay, fie!

And so, their sap-sweet season through,
the welkin swims in sound.
This worthy may the day outstay;
and that, the nightlong round.

Lord Phoebus of the Poplars,
accept this meed of song!
Their singing bee is raised to thee,
thy simmering summer long.

And, when the sparrow's arrow beak
shall void John Ciggler's belly,
though but a shell, his wings shall still
throb out his paean shrilly.

And should the shrike Jack's fiddle spike
upon some cruel thorn,
poor Grig must click with feeble kick
a threnody forlorn.

Though back to mould Tiresias old
may dwine, his accents linger.
No wonder then the poets feign
song aye survives the singer.

PETER HOPEGOOD.

AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE, 1943

By H. M. Green

1943 was a year of inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes. Take, to begin with, the tantalising situation in which the Australian writer found himself. On the one hand he knew that if he could get a book published—prose, verse, or, to include some of the ultra-moderns, anything else—it would sell like cigarettes. What is more, he knew that the publishers were well aware of this, and would be glad to publish anything in reason, and now and then a little beyond reason. And yet between the desk and the printed book there was a gulf greater than before the war, though not nearly so great as it had been a generation ago. What with lack of manpower and paper, local books are being held up everywhere; a leading Australian publisher had fifty in hand not long ago. More: the editions that it is still possible to bring out have to be far smaller than the demand would warrant, though they are still far larger than in our fathers' days.

It was another average year. There were on the whole fewer books worth reading, and though an outstanding poet appeared, his work occupied only a small part of a small booklet, and it was not his best work. Only one of the novels was notable, and that—what *was* the matter with 1943?—was withdrawn almost immediately after its publication. And the best of the plays was again by no means its author's best.

A small quarto paper-covered booklet, with a printed title (and a note "No. 1, July 1943", but there were no more of them during the year) and the rest mimeographed, contained poems by A. D. Hope, Garry Lyle and Harry Hooton. Lyle had published some worth-while verse before; Hooton and Hope have been seen hitherto only in periodicals. Hope, a Sydney University graduate who lectures in English at the Sydney Teachers' College, is among the leading Australian poets of the day; an outspoken and pitiless social satirist, he shows his hand here but does no more than that. Of the other books of verse—and some of them contain better work than any in the booklet mentioned, though none can compare with Hope's at its best—the most noteworthy were Brian Vrepont's *Beyond the Claw*, F. J. H. Letters's *The Great Attainder* and Norma Davis's *Earth Cry*. Vrepont is sixty-two years old, though one would never infer that from his verses; he is, in fact, one of the leaders of the younger poets who find their principal outlet in *Meanjin Papers* and the Jindyworobak publications. Though he is not among our leading half dozen, Vrepont

is sensitive to beauty and ugliness and possesses a markedly individual style. Letters is an academic, who belongs in many respects to a past literary generation; yet he can call one of his poems "The Lovesong of P. Eustace Toomey", and now and then he surprises with an irregularity of rhythm or startles with a striking and original image, such as that of the

stockman in a crowded restaurant
Homesick for a mirage.

And the fragment beginning "O face of carven light" is really beautiful. Norma Davis is a "nature" poet, and some of her poems are not much more than descriptions of scenery, but at her best they are informed by mood and personality. A pity she has not got rid of such romantic tags as "fay harebells blue", "elfin touch" and "pixie colours".

Next, a group of Meanjins and Jindyworobakians. Of two booklets by Ian Mudie, *The Australian Dream,* a longish poem of the type of O'Dowd's *The Bush,* is interesting, but somehow does not quite get there. Mudie is disappointing; his undoubted talent so seldom contrives to screw itself to the sticking place. One feels much the same way about Paul Grano (whose *Quest* is his best book yet) and Rex Ingamells (*Unknown Land* and *Content Are the Quiet Ranges*), though there is a taking whiff of tar about "Old Lag's Monologue", from the first of these two books. Then there is Flexmore Hudson (*With the First Soft Rain* and *Indelible Voices*) and Gina Ballantyne (*Vagrant*). Why is it that so many of these poets fail to realise the best that is in them? There is Michael Thwaites, whose sonorous "Milton Blind", a Newdigate Prize poem, stands out above the rest of his *Jervis Bay and Other Poems.* And there are a number of balladists. The war, with its primitive stresses and simplicities, seems to be giving a new lease of life to the ballad, though none of the later balladists so far seems to be establishing a freehold like that of the old hands. This year's best books of ballads are, perhaps, Charles Shaw's *Warrumbungle Mare,* Lex McLennan's *The Spirit of the West* and Will Lawson's *Bush Verses.*

It was a poor year for fiction, but as usual there was one outstanding novel. Kylie Tennant's *Ride On, Stranger* may be as good as anything she has written. But there is the usual catch: the book has been withdrawn from publication; it is said to have cut a little too close to the bone, that is, to real life. *Ride On, Stranger* is the story of a girl who begins as an unwanted baby; becomes a waif, in and out of all sorts of overworked, underpaid occupations on the seedy

side of Sydney; develops unexpected character, personality and all-round ability; and ends as a soldier's widow, running a dairy farm. Shannon is a queer, attractive little devil, always seeking an ideal but always riding on again, disillusioned. The book illustrates Kylie Tennant's besetting disability: there is no construction about it; it is just one thing happening after another. But there is an extraordinary richness of events and of characters, and you might meet any of her people any day, if you happened to walk into his or her particular environment. A very real book, but more crude unorganised life about it than art. A second novel by the same author, *Time Enough Later,* which also deals with a girl adrift in some of the same dingy environments, is amusing but much slighter. James Aldridge's *Signed with Their Honour* belongs actually to 1942, but was not available for last year's summary. The subject—an R.A.F. airman in a suicide fighter squadron trying to cover the retreat in Greece—is one that would have suited Hemingway. And unfortunately Aldridge imitates Hemingway, the Hemingway of *Fiesta,* or, to a lesser extent, of *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Yet Aldridge shows through his model, and one would have hoped he would develop a style of his own; but in a later novel he seems to be Hemingwaying again.

Only two other works of fiction need be mentioned here. The first is *In the Sun,* a collection of short stories by Margaret Trist. Old men, children, and all who are subject to the inescapable tyranny of the unimaginative everyday world: these, in the main, are Margaret Trist's subjects. The range of her stories is narrow and her sympathy is sometimes a little sentimental, but her types are handled deftly, realistically and with humour. The second is *Outback Occupations,* by the author of the already mentioned *Warrumbungle Mare.* Shaw tells his tale in the present tense and second-personal manner ("You decide that things being what they are . . . you will not take the sheep", etc.) that was adopted by "Steele Rudd" in his last book, but everything else is Shaw's, and the sketches are bright and amusing.

There were several good plays. *Ned Kelly* does not reach the standard of the later work that has set Douglas Stewart among our leading playwrights. There is an occasional Shavian reminiscence, particularly in the attempt to make "pointed" conversation take the place of action, and the argument with the bushrangers in the hotel bar is a little unreal. But whether the play acts well or not, it is so alive, so vivid, so amusing, that one can't pass it over. Dymphna Cusack's *Morning Sacrifice* represents a very great advance upon her *Red Sky at Morning,* which was mentioned here last year. That was by com-

parison thin and sentimental; this is solid stuff, based on hard fact and detailed observation: a bitter satire that runs into tragedy. The characters, teachers in a girls' school, are typical and yet individualised. The play is good enough to recall the classics on the subject, *Regiment of Women* and *Mr Perrin and Mr Traill.* Another play worth mentioning is G. L. Dann's *Caroline Chisholm,* which has the virtue of bringing a wonderful woman alive again.

The year produced no essays or criticisms of importance, but Tom Moore's *Six Australian Poets* must be mentioned here, since through a lapse of memory it was omitted from last year's summary. O'Dowd, Baylebridge, Brennan, McCrae, Neilson and FitzGerald are all interestingly analysed and exemplified, and in spite of a certain lack of construction and perspective, the book should be extremely useful to lovers of Australian literature.

Of the current periodicals and regular annual anthologies there is little to say. *Meanjin* and *Southerly* kept up their now well established reputations; nothing more need be said about the Jindyworobaks; and the Ern Malley bomb had not yet burst beneath Max Harris and his *Angry Penguins.* Several new anthologies appeared, however. *Australian New Writing,* No. 1, is an interesting, rather tendentious collection, which includes some good work but omits the best of the younger writers. *Australian Writers Speak,* which should have been mentioned last year, is a series of wireless talks arranged by the Fellowship of Australian Writers. And Professor A. L. Sadler's *Selections from Modern Japanese Writers,* translations which are intended in the first place to help students of the language, gives also some insight into the curious mentality of the Japanese.

SEASCAPE

In the bitter pools by the shore
the cloud rose is blooming;
light blossoms and falls
in errant beauty.
Fall, flower of the high
ocean of heaven!
Fall to a sunken sky,
nightwards ebbing.

IAN MAXWELL.

OUT OF A FOLD IN TIME

Out of a fold in Time come silently fluttering
Moth emblems that hint at the limits of our despair.
Can the ten-year-old suit be invisibly mended?
Is the college scarf the boys gave me fit to wear?

Thus the time for a long look back comes duly,
And O, my heart runs wide and widdershin,
To discard the charming cravat, the too facile tenderness,
And the evil of the world that is also the evil within.

The agonised delight distilled from a slow movement
By Mozart or Beethoven, when music's weird they dree,
Not more consoling is than this disaster—
The passion-conquering sweetness of reverie.

The Great Ones drive us on to Contemplation,
Although in their eyes passion alone has weight,
For this is the name for the last and greatest Crisis—
The slow Past bringing its chosen one to his Fate.

Those who Dante banished and spirited Beatrice,
Who thrust Villon into a harlot's arms at the gallows-pole,
Willed that Poetry's Self in her own eyes should seem a phantom
And conjoint be to her own buried soul.

It is the same in the lives of the old masters,
Mirrored in all the suffering of their desire—
The birth, the recreation is from terror,
But nothing is violent, and burns slowly the fire.

Out of a fold in Time come silently fluttering
Moth emblems that hint at the limits of our despair:
And whether it be the old tweed patched and mended,
Or a brand-new Repatriation suit when the war has ended,
They are ceremonial masks and silks that we wear.

. . . . . .

Veiled yet revealed by the curtain wait the Prompters,
A clinging crescent of dust outlines an arrested hand,
Stiff-edged a fold betrays the paste-board scabbard,
And soon come the opening strains of a Saraband.

Dancer, your feet shall move to a Ritual Measure,
In a new technique that upholds the ancient Art.
Dance not with your feet alone, O Destined Dancer,
These are the steps you dreamed to dance with your head and heart.

DONOVAN CLARKE.

SOMEBODY IS PLAYING THE GRAMOPHONE

By Murray Gordon

I must have dozed again (she said), I've been asleep, the fire is dying. A habit formed in middle age, this one of dropping off to sleep. But then, that's all my life is, all I want. To sleep, and hear, and hear, and hear. . . .

This room is mostly shadows; the only light comes from the embers. And it seems that all the people who've been with me in this room have left their shadows here behind them, to stand and sit within the room.

Façades without design they are, who come from hiding at such moments as this one, who have been waiting, watching me, not each other, waiting for me to wake and see them, and recognise them. And yet, and yet, and yet. . . .

There's one shape there that is no shadow, there's someone standing in the corner, a man is standing in the corner of my room that's been so empty. Standing there and playing Elgar. Which one is he of the three? Son or husband, son or husband? Or can he be the other one? But it's someone, strong in manhood, come to mould my life again.

My voice is locked within my body, words I have but cannot say them. Which of the three is he, and why his silence, standing by the gramophone? I cannot see whether he is looking at me, or gazing out of the window. He knows I am here, he must know I am here.

Whichever of the three loved music most, he will it be. And that is something I never knew, which of them loved it most; from all the comparisons I made, no decision came. Alexander? Who listened, scarcely breathing, entranced with Mozart, Brahms and Elgar, his head laid back upon the cushion, listening and receiving with his brain, his heart and his whole body? Or is it Philip? Who pro-ed and conned it, studied style and schools, who heard each note of every instrument? No, I don't think it is Philip, I don't think it is Alexander. I think that it is Ken, who listened with his eyes wide open, his heart wide open too, hearing with delight that climbed to ecstasy, the music of Delius, Bliss and Elgar.

This is Elgar, Alexander said, but I don't know whether you will like him, and I sat beside him on the couch, yes, I like it, I said, I do like it, watching his nose, his mouth and his eyes staring at the gramophone. Even though I can scarcely bear to hear it, like this, so near to Alexander, but still so far from him, I like it, I am trying to like it.

This is Elgar, I said to Philip, you probably won't like him, saying it because I hated him for his cold eyes and upcurled lip. But I think it is great music, I said, and he looked back at me with his cold eyes narrowed. The London Symphony Orchestra, I said, my own gaze resentful, but faltering. Conducted by Elgar himself, I said.

Is it the man who wrote God Save the King? Ken said. Not exactly, my darling, you must listen, listen to, listen, my son, come from the corner, Ken, come from the darkness to the firelight, come to where I am and stay with me where I am, my son.

Sitting with Alexander long ago, his hand warm round mine, I will turn the record over, I said, but his hand was tight round mine, with the rain smashing on the window, yes, I said, yes, I will marry you, and then for the first time he kissed me, my hand burning inside his, and the needle going slick, slick, slick, slick. . . .

And there was that other night in the mountains, Philip staring at me, I won't, I won't, I'll hate him always, I said, while the wind shrieked round the verandah. But he knew I would, he waited because he knew I would. And at the end of the second movement, not changing needles then, sitting there and staring at me, I staring at the fire, the needle saying slick, slick, slick, slick, I knew that no longer would I say I won't, he knew it too, and turned the record over. Philip, have you come again to watch me, depth my soul and find my secrets, hidden in the folded years? Philip, I do not want it, I've been too long lonely, too long one only.

In my lap my son was sleeping, one soft arm tucked underneath him, the other hanging to the floor. I wouldn't wake him, it was the end of the second movement, the needle going slick, slick, slick, slick, hollow roaring down the chimney, the fire scattering, leaping, and my son Ken sleeping.

I was so proud of him, the tears were forming in my eyes, the leader of the orchestra appearing, the people clapping desultorily. Who are those charming people? we heard them say behind us. It's the Ramsays, they whispered behind us, it really is a brilliant match, two old established families. They're called the ideal couple, so much in love with one another. The suffocating happiness, as we listened to the music, our hands lying lightly on our knees, our knuckles touching, listening to England's music. Alexander, Alexander, hold my hand in yours again, never let it go again, and we will live again together, in everlasting music.

Not proudly, but coldly, I walked with Philip up the stairs, perhaps proud of him, I don't know, yes, proud of him, I think, but

hating him and hated by him. The cynosure of all eyes, they said next day, Mrs Ramsay and an unidentified escort. Certainly proud of my own beauty, proud of him for his, but never proud of the two of us together. Glad to have him free my cloak as we sat on red plush chairs. It's Mrs Ramsay, they said behind me, she was a famous socialite, but hasn't been seen at concerts for over seven years.

They whispered in the seats behind us, talking of Ken and me. Her husband died a long time back, when this lad was only three. We waited, Ken and I, as the conductor raised his baton, and we heard the welcome sounds of Elgar, the flood of English music, Ken upright in his red plush chair, and I reflected in his beauty. Among those present was Mrs Ramsay, with her son on first term holidays. That's what they said in the next day's paper. So proud of Ken that evening, his love of music quickly forming, but Ken, come away from the gramophone, come near and let me see you.

Good-bye, said Alexander, I cannot hear it all, they're waiting for me at the junction. I'll write you every day, he said, and off he went in the cool dark evening, quickly hidden by the peppercorn tree. But he never came back, not in December as we planned it, never came back to hear new music. Alexander, Alexander, we'll begin our life again; with sensibilities rekindled, we'll begin our love again. But he's waiting, playing Elgar, in the shadows by the piano.

Turn the damned thing off, Philip said, stop the bloody music! And both our hatreds flashed and fused, and we knew the affair was ended. If I should leave this room, he said, I'll never come back again. I do not want you to, I said, I'm glad that it is over. And so he went in anger, but left alone within the room I felt my anger leave me. I knew I loved him after all, Philip the waster, cheat and cynic, I loved him through it all. But not again to live a life of passions, torments, tantrums. I do not want all that again; I've grown too old to be known too well.

I can't stay any longer, mother, I'll miss my train, Ken said, and drawing on his greatcoat, he kissed me for the last time. I might get leave again, he said, we'll just say au revoir. But I knew that he was going, to be swallowed by the war, and never come back, never come back. . . .

But he has come back, to fill my life again with love, Ken, come all the way, come all the way, don't stand ghostly in the corner, come and tell me where you've been, and tomorrow we will play it all, all of Elgar and the others, the noble English music.

And from the darkest corner of the room came the voice that she had waited for. "And so concludes our programme", it said, "of music by English composers."

She stood up, stood weakly, then turned on the light. The glare of it hit her eyes and made them ache. She went out of the room and into the hallway; she leaned over the staircase, hanging to it, and called to the woman in the flat below.

"Mrs Harrison", she called, "Mrs Harrison, are you still up?"

Her own voice frightened her when it hit the walls around the staircase, and echoed back at her derisively. She listened, but she could hear nothing.

"Mrs Harrison?" she called again, desperately this time, going down a few steps.

Then she heard footsteps, a door opened and an angled shape of light appeared on the landing below. The enormous bulk of her neighbour appeared.

"Is that you, Mrs Ramsay?"

"Yes", she said, "I thought you'd gone to bed. I wondered if you'd feel like having a cup of tea?"

"You come and have a cup with me", Mrs Harrison said, "I've got my kettle boiling."

"Oh thank you", said Mrs Ramsay.

She followed her neighbour into the flat that she had described so often and so well in letters to her family in Scotland, the hideous furniture, the old-fashioned photographs of Mrs Harrison's family, the china animals on the mantelpiece, on the bookcase and on the ugly little tables. But tonight it was different, it was warm in here in this overcrowded room, and she liked it.

They sipped their tea and nibbled biscuits.

"I heard you playing your gramophone", Mrs Harrison said.

"No, I wasn't", said Mrs Ramsay, "tonight it was the wireless."

———————

HEAVEN IS A BUSY PLACE

Heaven is a busy place.
Those in a state of grace
Continually twanging the harp.
And Court at eight-thirty sharp.
Did he do ill or well,
Shall he be sent to hell
That scoundrel in the dock?
The great black Judgment Book
Says little good of him:
Weeping of seraphim.

Twanging the harp and mourning.
Three more, a score for burning,
And always, if not the best,
Those of most interest . . .
And then the deputations—
Bishops for their congregations,
Relations and friends of cherubs,
Mahomet and all those Arabs . . .
Arrival, with knocking knees,
Of sixty thousand Chinese.

The incessant tinkle of strings.
And rain for Alice Springs
Now seven years in arrears.
Such multifarious cares,
Sparrows to be watched as they fall,
Elephants, ants and all
To the egg of the frog in the slime.
Then wind up the clock of time,
Douse the red sun in the deep,
Put the cat on the moon, and sleep.

Sir, I would make my petition:
Love, and fulfilled ambition,
Some friends to be partly protected,
Some enemies grossly afflicted,
And, if I rise no higher,
A place at least by the fire.
But earth is a busy planet
And, failing the timely minute,
I found it best to postpone,
Do as well as I could on my own.

Now I have found a place
Where in their twisted grace
Soft-footed mangroves glide,
Fishing the green of the tide
With net and club and spear;
And all is so silent here,
Lying by the gumtree's root
I hear a beetle's foot
Loud as a midnight thief
Crash on a fallen leaf.

If in the heavenly clime
They share such gaps in time,
Here if ever is the place
And the chance to state one's case.
But I must return a favour.
Life has a lovely flavour
And now there is time to waste
Now there is time to taste
(I think I shall not intrude)
Heaven is finding it good.

DOUGLAS STEWART.

SLEEP

The rose that leans its chin
Upon a curving leaf
And looks across the land
Knows not my grief;

The slug that frets the leaf
Blindly with mincing jaw
Obeys its life's command:

Each has a law
Within it and is free
Of my hard liberty.

Nature is sleep:
Beyond that sleep I press
Half-roused, yet cannot leap
To wakefulness.

JAMES MCAULEY.

THE BIG HOUSE

By J. McGuire

My mother had been harping on the buying of the big house for as long as I could remember, but she was a strong woman, and when at last she had got my father as far as the ponderous wrought iron gates she gave way to no provisional elation but carried straight on with impetus enough for the whole family. The wicket gate had not been opened for years and my father had to use considerable force to open it against the clinging weeds and creeper, but his part in making the entry remained menial and insignificant. My mother sailed through first. I came last, very much alive with an interest which I had to conceal out of loyalty to my father.

"The lawns"! said my mother, pointing as though to the scene of an earthquake.

"Is that lawn?" said father. "Looks like a paddock of barley to me."

"The shame of it! To think that this lawn was a billiard table ten years ago. Look at it. It's . . . it's abominable. They don't care, you see. Nobody cares. Nobody cares these days."

"I certainly wouldn't care to be mowing this lawn", said my father. "There's two acres if there's a perch or a rood or whatever it is."

"There's a caretaker, and a gardener. There used to be two gardeners. They did it all."

My mother knew all about the place because it had been her father's house. She had been born in it, and reared in it; but she had not been courted in it. My father had come from smaller surroundings and she had married him after the decline of her family fortune. The house had been let for years after they had left it and then sold for a relative song to a speculator who had been prevented for some reason from doing anything with it. By now it had been empty for years, the "for sale" notice now weathered and hanging brokenly on its post. My mother knew, as few people these days know, just how to live in a big house, how to run it, decorate it and behave in it. Her running of and decorating and behaving in our own house had been a purely tentative gesture for year after year.

"The magnolias", she said. "Just look!"

"Hmm. Big trees. Run to wood a bit by the look of it."

We trailed along the wide and weedy drive. The ornaments of the garden, the raised pools and plaster figures and pergolas were all overgrown by the competing creepers and shrubs and weeds.

"The house hasn't changed though", my mother observed when we came in full sight of the incredibly large mansion. The house was indeed an imposing building. Of course I had seen it many times before, with other school children had played in these grounds in preference to any other playground, but I had never seen it as a potential, even remotely potential, tenant, and so saw it really for the first time this day. It was grey unadorned stone, severe in line but liberal in size; my grandfather's face was severe and yet liberal, too, I remembered that.

"That house will never change, never. Never grow old", she continued.

"Make a good lunatic asylum", said my father, but not quite loudly enough to be heard even had she been listening.

"The virginia's up into the guttering, though. That will have to be got down. The sooner, the better, too."

We passed onto the flagged patio leading to the mighty front doors. My mother tried the doors as though daring them to be locked, but they were, and so she led on to the windows further along. We all looked through the windows in turn, working around the perimeter of the ground floor. The function and internal disposition and some of the history of each of the rooms were related to us by mother in a voice trained to show no sign of nostalgic emotion. Dust, cobwebs and spaciousness were the principal features of all the rooms. A wall put an end to our circumnavigation.

"Come. We'll find the caretaker and get the keys. There's a gate further along this wall. If we can find it in this jungle. Really I don't know what this caretaker does. The lantana, look at it!"

We found the gate and opened it. Then we learnt what the caretaker had been doing. A quarter acre of meticulously cared-for vegetable garden greeted our eyes. That is, it greeted my eyes and my father's. It offended my mother's.

"This is how he spends his time. Stuff for himself, and lets the rest of the place run wild."

"Good luck to him", said my father.

"He's paid to look after the property, not himself." She led us briskly through the rows of cabbages and cauliflowers towards the large barn-like building at the far end of the plot. Smoke was coming from a chimney reaching high above the slate roof. An open door, a barrow and gardening tools near by suggested an imminent presence.

My father began to lag a little as we neared the open door, and my mother reached it well ahead of us.

"Hulloo", she called. "Is anybody here?" Nobody answered, and she turned back to us as we came up. "There's nobody here. Nobody home, it seems."

"Can't be far off. There's a fire burning inside, somewhere."

"They've plenty of wood. They've cut down the jacarandas. Probably out for an afternoon's drinking."

"Man who looks after this doesn't drink much, I reckon."

"Hullo! Benson! Are you in there, Benson?" There was no response. "Either he's not there or he's asleep. Benson always was a great sleeper. We'll go in and see." She pushed the door wider and went in, beckoning to us to follow.

"I say, there might be somebody in there", said my father.

"That's just what I'm going to find out."

"Hang it all, this is somebody's house. I mean, after all, the fellow lives here."

"W'ere not burgling the place, are we? Wait here, then."

"I wish, I only wish", said my father, "I just wish I had your colossal hide, that's all I wish. We'd be making ten thousand a year."

"I wish you did, too", said my mother and went inside.

"Can you beat it!" said my father to himself. "She just pushes her great frame in anywhere. I don't like this. This sort of thing puts me on edge. I'm getting out of this."

The sound of a latch lifting caused us to turn around. A gate in another wall past the barn opened and through it came a middle-aged man and a young woman. The man saw us first and came forward alertly, leaving the girl to shut the gate. My father shuffled childishly and looked around uneasily at the barn door through which mother had gone. The man came right up to us with a slight frown on his brow.

"Good day", he said to my father. "What can I do for you?"

"Good afternoon. We—er——"

My mother emerged from the door and took over promptly.

"Ah! there you are. I thought you couldn't be far away. I see you've got your dinner ready. But you're not Benson. Where's Benson?"

"Benson. Oh, Benson's dead. He died about fourteen months ago. His brother died. His brother was younger than him and when he died it set old Benson off. He was as right as a bank until . . ." He halted himself under my mother's incinerating stare. "Did you want to see Benson, did you?"

"I want to find somebody who's supposed to be looking after this place. And I want a key to get into the house."

"Ah! Well, I haven't got the keys. You see, the keys used to be here, but when the old feller died I said to the agent that I didn't want no responsibility about the keys and he took 'em back. I didn't want the responsibility of the house, if you see what I mean."

"Yes, I see perfectly well what you mean. I've never seen a place so neglected in my life."

My father winced and allowed his eyes to follow the young woman as she passed us and entered the barn. He looked wistfully at the door which she closed behind her.

"Ar, there's not much anyone could do about the front of the place", said the man without emotion. "Not now, anyway, not without a lot of labour. Benson didn't do much the last few years y' know. I myself, I do a bit around the back here. Just this little patch keeps me quiet week in and week out."

"I suppose you sell the stuff?"

"No, not much. Not unless anyone wants something, or I've got a bit of a surplus. No, this little patch keeps me and me niece going just nicely."

"Your niece! Well, how do you come to be here? What's your name?"

"My name's Millikan. I used to work here off and on when the old Hillarys had the place. It was some place then. Four gardeners at times they had then. The garden was a picture, every inch of it. Course I was only a young feller then. Then when old Benson was findin' it a bit lonely and a bit too much for 'im, I come to a bit of an arrangement with him. With 'im, not the agent. I've got an arrangement with the agent now, though, of course. Not about the keys, though. You'll have to see him about the keys."

My mother had lost interest. "I suppose you sell the magnolias, then?" she said, seemingly determined to find something the man sold.

"No. Not the magnolias. Nobody wants them these days. I sell the tulips, though. There's some pretty fancy bulbs in this place if you know where to look around."

"The Grenadier Tulips. Uh! is everybody getting those now?"

"Yes, I sell a lot. There's plenty of them."

"Yes, I know there are plenty of them. Well, now, since you haven't got the keys we'll go and get them and come later on."

"This is your quickest way", said the man. "Through the back gate. Quickest way out of 'ere; quickest way to the agent. Tell 'im I sent you. Do you know the way from here?"

"Yes, I know the way", said my mother preparing to move.

"You know?" said the man, moving back and looking at her more directly. "I think I've met you somewhere. I've just got a feeling, y' know. I'm sure I must've met you somewhere or other. I don't know where it could've been, but somewhere. . . ."

My mother turned to us with a signal and then made for the gate very quickly. She opened it. Father shut it. When we caught up with her she was spitting out the words: "Met me! Met me!"

Father looked at me and grinned. We were not going to the agent's.

EXPLANATIONS

In obedience to a Government order, *Southerly*, along with certain other periodicals, is now issued on newsprint. An exception was made for the MacCallum Number, and for this we express our thanks to the Controller of Paper. How long the shortage of better material will continue it is impossible to say, but we hope that supplies will be made available at the earliest possible moment to such publications as *Southerly*.

As it was desirable that the MacCallum Number should appear in September, near the second anniversary of Sir Mungo's death, that number was given precedence over the present one and the McKellar Number, which was intended to be the second of the year but will now be the fourth. It is hoped that no confusion was caused by the rearrangement, and that contributors will looked indulgently on the delay in publication of their work.

WRITER AND READER

THE SUBLIMINAL AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Barjai: A Meeting Place for Youth. Edited by Laurence Collinson and Barrie G. Reid. Numbers 12, 13, 14 and 15. (Box 1773 W, G.P.O., Brisbane. 7s. 6d. a year.)

Angry Penguins. Edited by Max Harris and John Reed. Autumn, 1944. (Reed and Harris, Melbourne. 4s. 6d.)

Barjai is a result of that assertion of youth which developed from the Great Depression; it is the voice of adolescence, clamant for a share in the control of its own destinies and of the world.

> An attempt is being made in the pages of this magazine to present Youth's statement of its reactions to life. . . .
>
> The critic will find in these pages little of that humour and carefree exuberance of spirit so often attributed to Youth. Perhaps this is regrettable, but there can be little humour left in minds born during depression and growing to maturity in war. (Editorial—No. 12.)

But the editors become almost at once appalled by the gloomy prospect they have conjured up for themselves. Collinson in "Song of Youth" cries:

> We must have laughter,

and after a lugubrious catalogue of woes ends up:

> We must learn to laugh.

So, too, Reid, in "Struggle", finishes a longish poem with:

> Come laughter and surge the sea of me.

Laughter, alas! does not come often enough. There are hints that it might be moved in Mary Wilkinson's prize story "Sunday Afternoon" (No. 15), which gives a simple sketch of suburbia with feminine attention to detail. Thea Astley's little essay "Poetic Fire" (No. 13) has touches of humour, as has Cecel Knopke's poem "Of Myself" (No. 14). In the same number, Moriet D'Ombrain, in "Who Has Seen?", catches something of a Gaelic spirit of romance and fancy, and Laurence Collinson, finally, proves his versatility by writing in lighter vein "For the Amusement of Margaret" and a short clerihew with the long title "The Young Lady and the Oedipus Complex". But these flashes of youthful exuberance are rare, and the serious and even pessimistic tone is dominant in *Barjai*.

There is a certain humility, or at any rate lack of arrogance in these *Barjai* papers that I like very much. It is especially noticeable in the prose. Thus, Collinson in "Letters to Modern Poets—T. S. Eliot" (No. 12) writes with evident sincerity of appreciation and goes on: "I imagine I shall have to wait a year or two before I understand it [*The Waste Land*] fully." Equally simple and sincere is the work of his co-editor in reviewing a number of modern poets and *The Vegetative Eye* in "Modern Reading" (No. 13). Profound judgment is not expected of such youthful critics, and sincerity is an excellent substitute.

Barjai's poetry is its biggest and best feature. If it is symptomatic of the poetry of the future, then there is some hope for the latter. True, like most youthful poetry (all its writers are under twenty-one and most much under that age), it inclines to seriousness and even despair. But it has many good qualities. It has meaning and point. It can be passionate, as in Barrie Reid's "These Leaden Weights" (No. 13), in its call to youth for action against control by elders.

> We can no more allow the warped wills of old men
> To fashion for us the future. It is ours.
> Cast off the leaden weights that make the drab decrees.
> Climb the high heart's wall and cry out Action.

It voices regret for the misunderstandings and enmities of men who should be brothers; it is puzzled that the simple logic of peaceful living has not been mastered by men. What Barrie Reid expresses in prose in his short "Against Oblivion" (No. 15) is repeated in substance by Louis H. Clark (A.I.F.) in "This Peace?" (No. 15):

> Victory without a lasting Peace is War;
> A germ filled sore that poisons up again,
> Once more its core, its cancerous filthy core,
> Is but one thing—the distrusting of men!

It has some acute observation of the modern social scene, for example, in Rona Reid's little "Jitterbugs" and Berry McFarlane's "Maroubra".

The general picture of gloom and depression is occasionally relieved, as in Cecel Knopkes' "Two Sonnets" (No. 13), which are reflectively sentimental in tone, though they conclude:

> . . . Something reminds
> Me always of the sorrows of the world.

or in Norma Graff's "Desire" (No. 14), which is unrestrainedly zestful and mounts to a grateful climax:

> I want . . .
> To thank my God that I am here.

These young poets of *Barjai* deserve every encouragement. They are mostly skilful in the handling of words; they give little evidence of the truculent challenge, of the bluster of inexperience, which disfigure so much youthful writing elsewhere. If their note is generally serious and pessimistic and deficient in the saving grace of humour, the circumstances of its production have given it by way of compensation a certain austere effectiveness, a form and discipline that are welcome signs. Let us hope that the editorial pronouncement in No. 13, "A little experimentation would not be out of place", will not be too liberally interpreted.

The Autumn Number of *Angry Penguins* is specially commemorative "of the Australian poet Ern Malley". Sidney Nolan supplies a distinctive cover illustrative of two texts from the more idiotically meaningless lines of the posthumous masterpiece "The Darkening Ecliptic":

> I said to my love (who is living)
> Dear we shall never be that verb
> Perched on the sole Arabian Tree,

and

> (Here the peacock blinks the eyes
> of his multipennate tail).
>
> ("Petit Testament.")

Yet there is something about this painting, with its richness and delicacy of colouring, that appeals to me despite certain obvious crudities in its execution no less than in its conception. This appeal is much the same as that which Dobell's controversial paintings have for many—freakish art redeemed by a glory of colour. To "Ern Malley" thirty-five pages are devoted. The core is a manuscript of sixteen poems, "The Darkening Ecliptic", and it is buttressed fore and aft—fore, by Mr. Harris's introduction explaining the circumstances of the discovery of the new Australian poet, with biographical particulars, and a preparatory statement of the author's principles to which Mr. Harris supplies a running commentary; aft, by a prose "Elegiac" and a poetic "Biography" by (does it surprise you?) Mr. Harris—an impenetrable jungle of words. These are specimens from the two last named:

> the long golden dirndl swept with the rhythms of sin
> about the purple sex of the penultimate mountain ranges.
>
> ("Elegiac.")

I am deciphered by the black waters,
union, and terrorist surge avid in my fields.

("Biography.")

At the end of "Petit Testament" ("the mighty 16th poem", as Mr. Harris calls it) comes the mighty climax:

There is a moment when the pelvis
Explodes like a grenade . . .

. . . .

I have split the infinite. Beyond is anything.

Actually, as we now know, what was beyond was nothing, for the story of Ern Malley was soon revealed as a complete and audacious literary hoax. The poems of Ern Malley represent a conspiracy by two young Sydney poetasters to debunk the pretensions of Mr. Harris and his Angry Penguins. I feel sorry for Mr. Harris, and I don't like the method by which his humiliation was effected. It is his weakness that he lacks a satisfactory poetical or even critical canon by which to direct his work, but that is a fault shared by many of the poets and writers of his generation. Mr. Harris, acting in accordance with his own beliefs, had every reason to accept the work of Ern Malley, as a supreme example of his unusual principles. The deception is the more to be deplored as there are scattered throughout the poems sufficient phrases of poetic quality to ensure its acceptance. Phrases like:

Cool as spreading fern ("Sonnets for the Novachord"),
The Black swan of trespass on alien waters ("Durer: Innsbruck, 1495"),
tangents to the rainbow ("Palinode"), and
wreathed in dying garlands ("Perspective Lovesong")

are rich bait to deck a trap withal.

Mr. Harris is not to blame for all the crazy art of a crazy age: he is simply one of its protagonists. Indeed, he would have been untrue to his own queer ideals if he had refused to accept the specimens offered. So that, in the ultimate analysis, he has my sympathy, and the debunkers add nothing to their stature either as poets or as individuals. In the history of literature great and even famous figures have fallen victims to hoaxes and have lost nothing by it.

Even without the contributions of the supposititious Ern Malley, there is a substantial body of prose and poetry in this *Angry Penguins*. The prose is infinitely better than the poetry because it is food of the consciousness and not vomit of the subliminal. There are two short stories in the naturalistic idiom of the day. Peter Cowan's "The Fence" is plainly written about a fencing jobber, a girl, and a brother who misjudged the intimacy of their relations, with a few appropriate swear-words and an otherwise tame ending. Dal Stivens has "You Call me by My Proper Name" in the same muddy manner, with a much braver showing of bad language than Mr. Cowan. Like so many of its type, it is episodic, having neither beginning nor end and no proper explanation of the middle.

"Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?", by Leonhard Adam, is interesting and gives good illustrations of aboriginal art. Gordon Thomson's "Criticism and Conveyance" is not very profound, but his plea for some positive meaningfulness of aesthetic is not inept. More thoughtful is Hugh Philp's "Surrealism Cannot be Art", which shows a good sense of critical criteria and exposes the Freudian fallacy in attempting the representation of the unconscious in art. The controversy on Albert Tucker's "Conceptual Art" is continued in two polemical articles which seem oddly out of place in a literary journal, as does Tucker's "The Flea and the Elephant", which pleads that art should be free from political bias or influence.

The review by John Reed of *Australian Present-Day Art* offers the comical spectacle of the blind leading the blind, yet it is clear and explicit. When an added weight of years has brought the editors of *Angry Penguins* wisdom and experience, they may chuckle at their own premature cocksureness. It is to their credit in the prose sections, at least, that they allow an uncontradicted presentation of viewpoints differing from their own.

The "Poetry" of *Angry Penguins* is for the most part the greatest farrago of meaningless drivel and self-leg-pulling nonsense it has been my misfortune to read. It made me feel much as Douglas Jerrold did when on a sick bed he attempted to read Browning's *Sordello*. I am happy and relieved to realise now that the weakness is not in my brain.

The contributions begin with half a dozen poems, nearly 400 lines in all, by Max Harris. "Birdsong" starts the collection and gives the keynote nicely:

> **The bird that turns my feathers iron**
> **my vitals felon, and charismatic violence**
> **this proud duress my universe. . . .**

Equally clear and inspiring is the final couplet:

> **The birds that blossom their veiled wombs**
> **sleep gently on the dead folds of these thoughts.**

From "The Legend of the Little Death" we have:

> **The snake that dwelt on the brown girl's loins**
> **sleered off with a human cry**
> **for the public dust was now aureate fire**
> **on burning earth, in aching sky.**

Here an inserted corrigendum slip explains that "public" should read "pubic". Well! "Poem for a Journey", the magnum opus, spins some 260 lines of similar what-shall-we-call-it. My free service tip to the author is to learn restraint.

The post of honour next to Mr. Harris is awarded to Arthur Davies, who attempts a modernised version of the life of Christ in some 350 lines, made up of "Holy Background" and eight parts. It opens with grandiloquent catholicity of invitation:

> **Attend, all drunkards, sluts and liars,**
> **pimps, kleptomaniacs, parasites, teasers,**
> **cheats, fakes, loafers, flash and seedy;**
> **Here was the setting of Joshua's life.**

Throughout, he favours the categorical inventory method to suggest the vast range of his thought, and the more progressive narrative sections between these compendious catalogues must be read to be believed. Bernard Smith's "Triumphant Elegy" is three parts a retrospect of misery in history, and is very vague about the triumph, but it is not unpromising work. Geoffrey Dutton, described in the Who's Who of contributors as a "handsome and devastating hunk of airman", produces a very unhandsome but certainly devastating piece called "Pity for Man", which starts lucidly:

> **Brought to the background of a slack Sunday,**
> **Love last weeks no redeemer.**

Alister Kershaw, "vigorous, violent and witty as personality", writes "Fighter Pilot" a short elegiac for Richard Hillary, with the noble exordium:

> **How govern, murder of the loyal miles, measure**
> **With final agonies, certain excuses in the heart?**

How Hubert Witheford got his "Poem" in here remains a mystery, for it has a coherence and a meaning that put it outside the charmed circle of the hierophants. A little oasis in a dreary desert. Colin Thiele, too, in his "'One Failed

to Return'", and "The Passing" reveals a power of striking imagery and a sense of symbols, besides showing something of meaning and clear purpose. Barrie Reid and Laurence Collinson, editors of *Barjai,* give further demonstrations of adolescent precocity. It is a pity to see youths with a clear gift of words throw their seed on barren ground, and ape adulthood by pretending to an impossible experience.

Erik Schwimmer, an ingenuous Netherlander, writes a poem with a title nearly as long as itself to cover some point (of Euclidean dimensions) he is making. Roy Leaney, who we are told has a "weak stomach but curious syntax", supplies "Pyramid of Vine", a poem so characteristic of the A.P. manner that I am constrained to quote the first stanza:

> Will the dribbling moon kill me now?
> The moon that once gave
> flower
> human dense and try
> for fine
> there seaweed caught in my cuff
> released from wet
> to sprinkle with sanded ego:
> then shadows
> cut geometrically spheroid
> fine tissue—like nerve was bent.

Surely not a weak stomach? The conviction that there must be a mistake in this statement is strengthened by a reading of his second poem, "The World This Distension of Mine". Frank Kellaway, who "can recite his work verbatim in Chinese café's" (what have the Chinese done to deserve this?), contributes a lengthy "Strange Wisdom of the North", which, despite its indefiniteness and lack of precise outline, seems sincere enough, and might be distinctly moving if done in a simpler manner. More promise and added meaning are evident in James Paxton's three offerings, with their softened symbolism.

The American contributors are mostly, if not all, servicemen. First comes Harry Roskolenko, who brings a fresh breath from the sea in three poems of somewhat wearying rhythm. Walter Heiby has two brief poems. Let him speak for himself. The lines are the first half of "Organ Green":

> I mated pain . . .
> conceived some words
> upon the crags of my mind's hell.
> There was a horrible gestation,
> and now the bastard for what it is
> herewith in anguish vomited:

Either international goodwill can be stretched too far or there may be more hoaxers than Ern Malley. Harlan Crippen croaks hoarsely of Spain and hints at vengeance in "Geography". He then writes a provoking title "Lines for a Lost Lady with Lavender Hair", and with this much achieved promptly dismisses the subject:

> Tell me, did you not hear of Spain?
> Or were you not warned
> when the letter sent to Munich
> was delivered in Madrid and Prague,
> with heavy postscripts,
> the death in Paris,
> the fire in London?

Jan Brevet may have his tongue in his cheek in making his offerings, "Poem" and "Still World, Weep Still", in which the editors find a "curious Miltonic

idiom, rare in contemporary poetry". Finally, we seem to catch the authentic A.P. note in the "First Furrowing" of Vincent Ferrini, "brilliant left-wing poet":

> Buses gulped and puked them.
> Like bullets out of a gangster's gat the people
> Bore home hated home loved home stabbed home.

Here it is again in the second stanza of "Testament":

> This living thumps a hollow bell of agony
> Icebergs of workers' jaws
> Narrow with hunger
> Their veins trampled by want
> I walk in your body
> Secure in the only country I have
> As the people nomadize upon this eggshell.

H. L. McLoskey.

THE MYTH AND MAX HARRIS

The Vegetative Eye, by Max Harris. (Reed and Harris, Melbourne, 1943, 11s. 6d.)

Max Harris's first novel, *The Vegetative Eye,* has been almost universally condemned by its critics—which seems just, in view of the book's abstruseness and other repellent qualities. It is a destructive, morbid piece of work, and its author shows to his audience even more indifference than does the Blake of the *Prophetic Books,* without having Blake's virtues as a writer and a mystic. Yet, tempted as the reader may be to banish this experiment as a work that could have been written equally well by an Ern Malley,* he must examine its genesis if he wishes to assess it as literature.

Harris's debt to his most interesting influence, Blake, will be spoken of later. Immediately, his book is a deliberate expression of the cult of the "modern metaphysical school", the New Apocalypse. Supported by such writers as G. S. Fraser, J. F. Hendry, Henry Treece and Nicholas Moore, this movement is said to derive from Pound and Eliot through Freud and the surrealists, and it looks to Franz Kafka as its first modern exponent. It is defined as a "dialectical development of surrealism" and asserts the right, denied by surrealism, of controlling and selecting the material offered by the subconscious. Since no man (except perhaps a psychoanalyst) can know any subconscious but his own, the art of the Apocalyptics is purely subjective, interpreting the artist in his relationship to society, seeking subjective truth through the "immediately experienced particular". To express this truth, allegory or some personal "myth" is usually essential.

As early as 1941 Max Harris predicted that the novel would develop along the lines of the allegory, that art would approach more closely to "the dark forces of the unconscious that produce it". And, consistent with his own artistic beliefs, he wrote *The Vegetative Eye,* which he describes as "an unravelling of the emotional, imaginative and intellectual elements of experience . . . essentially personal and non-fictional in its reference". Perhaps the adoption of the purely subjective method required as much courage as vanity in the author; but in the result his attempt to record and analyse his own thoughts, feelings and hidden

* Poeta australiensis, fictus (see page 43).—Editor.

desires in relation to love (or rather, to the libido) is both confusing and confused. From the maze there emerges, if the reader perseveres, a picture of an objectionable young man, posturing and petulant, who is unable to get any joy from life because he is too egocentric to give anything in return. He tells of the fall from the child state of innocence, the awakening of adolescent desire, the affair with a girl whom he does not love until her "charming indifference" shows he has lost her, the mental anguish in which he longs to be the Byronic hero who refuses to be bound by his loves, yet yearns for the self-forgetfulness in love which he is incapable of achieving, the elopement with the girl, his rejection of her, and his final realization of himself as a human being. The girl Jeannie, her brother Jack, the personage Hans (who is both vital impulse and cynical destroyer) are, as well as most of the other incidental characters in the book, all facets of Harris's own personality; for his positive imagination is such that he cannot help re-creating others in his own image and is thus "doomed to walk in the valley of inverts".

The banalities of the surface plot are inextricably muddled with the recording of mind-states and sub-conscious fantasies, as well as with allegorical figures from the literature that has most influenced Harris's mind—figures used so arbitrarily that their meaning is seldom apparent. Harris sees himself as a Baudelaire in his desires of the flesh and love of corruption, as a Rilke in his preoccupation with death and his incapacity to love, as a Byron destroying those who love him in order to maintain his "identity", as a Proust experiencing love only when love has departed. He harps on Baudelaire's dark mistress, Jeanne Duval, on his mother Mme. Aupick, and on the family lawyer M. Ancelle who is constantly used as a "signpost"; but he gives these figures meanings that are mainly his own, just as he uses Sappho and Phaon to signify feelings and desires that appear to have little relevance. His constant cry is that the artist, whose imaginative insight makes him best qualified to interpret himself and therefore others, is prevented by his self-consciousness from losing himself in love; this also was the cry of Baudelaire and of Rilke. In fact, most of Harris's thoughts and feelings, even in his most obscure moments, appear purely, and perhaps inevitably, derivative. The essays he interposes in his attempts simultaneously to record and analyse show some intellectual grasp but little originality—whether he is dealing with memory and imagination, with art and the artist, with love and death, or with power and the poet.

Judging Harris as a follower of the Apocalyptics, we must say that he does not sufficiently select and integrate the material offered by his subconscious. Certainly the exploration of the self might be a fine thing if the artist had a self that was in richer and wider communication with the outside world than Max Harris's, and if the artist's myth or myths by which he expressed his concept of internal reality had a more general and intelligible application. The myth or daemon, as the essence of the creative imagination, is powerful in almost all great literature; but communication is essential to art, and only Freud himself could clearly understand more than sixty per cent. of *The Vegetative Eye*.

Max Harris and the Apocalyptics regard themselves as romantics in an age that is classical through its devotion to objective reality; they believe the romantic situation to be the "more fundamental", and no doubt they are right. So when Max Harris prefaces his novel with a quotation from Blake's MS. notes on "a Vision of the Last Judgment" we think we may have a clue to his thought and his method:

I assert for My Self that I do not behold the outward Creation and that to me it is hindrance & not Action; it is as the dirt upon my feet, No part of Me. "What", it will be Questioned, "When the Sun rises do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a Guinea?" "O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty'." I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it.

Blake, a romantic in an age of reason, revolted against the commonsense orderliness of the eighteenth century in asserting the supreme importance of the individual vision or imagination. The world of matter, in itself unreal, was for him a mirror of spiritual realities; to depend on the "vegetative eye" (single vision) alone was to be the slave of illusion. When Blake's imagination was at its height he claimed the fourfold vision that is equivalent to the complete mystical experience.

Now I a fourfold vision see,
And a fourfold vision is given to me.
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,
And threefold in soft Beulah's night,
And twofold always.

Mysticism has only recently, with the investigation of the subconscious, been seriously taken into modern thought; for in spite of the surface romanticism of the nineteenth century, its thought was essentially continuous with that of the eighteenth in its testing of truth by scientific experiment. Now we are beginning to see Blake in perspective; we are finding that, approached psychologically rather than logically, his romanticism becomes intelligible as an intellectually based affirmation of the limitations of a purely materialistic view of the universe.

Harris has followed Blake's psychology, for, like Blake's, his vision is in several layers: the farthest is the vegetative eye of pure perception; closer is the imagination which negates and transmutes the former; nearest is the subconscious, which may be interpreted by the intellect through the imagination. The subconscious, existing in two planes, provides the "contraries without which there is no progression". This is Blake's phrase and Blake's concept, expressed most vividly in the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*: it is only by experiencing, through the vegetative eye, the life of actuality, which is death, that we can enter the whole life of the spirit. Harris constantly refers back to the idea of progression through contraries. But he does not share Blake's essential mysticism, nor his vision of the universe; he has more in common, perhaps, with Rilke and Dostoevsky. While accepting Blake's psychology and much of his philosophy, Harris interprets the Blakean concepts in psychoanalytic terms. He carries more obvious echoes of Freud than of Blake, seeing the figments of his own unconscious instead of the "innumerable company of the heavenly host".

With all its hotch-potch of sources, *The Vegetative Eye* fails as literature, chiefly because it is unintelligible and badly written. It is a pretentious and ugly thing, made uglier by its medley of printing types and the horrors of its prose. Still, it would be interesting to see more of mysticism and the myth in Australian literature.

BEATRICE DAVIS.

FRESH FRUITS OF AUSTRALIAN POETRY

Beyond the Claw. By Brian Vrepont. (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1943. 3s. 6d.)

Battle Stations. By John Quinn. (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1944. 3s. 6d.)

A Second Summary. By Harry Roskolenko. (Reed and Harris, Melbourne and Adelaide, 1944.)

Night Flight and Sunrise. By Geoffrey Dutton. (Reed and Harris, 1944.)

Excellent Stranger. By Alister Kershaw. (Reed and Harris, 1944.)

Readers of *The Bulletin* and of *Meanjin Papers* will be familiar with some of the work of Brian Vrepont now published in a collected edition under the title *Beyond the Claw.* Poets do not always realise that their reputations may be better served by a poem here and there in magazines and anthologies than by collections. There is a sameness about the majority of the poems of this collection, a limited vision and a limited range of emotions. The title is explained by the first of the stanzas addressed to the reader:

> Does it come ill my book is timed with war?
> Maybe; yet in this perilous hour
> Need is to remember back from fang and claw
> To the bird song and the flower.

Poets who profess to lead us back from war and the machine age to nature must, if they are to be convincing as poets, make us feel that we are returning to nature with a new insight, born of experience. Mr. Vrepont rarely succeeds in this. However, he writes always with care in the selection of his words. His images are clear-cut. Certain of the poems, notably "The Fishers" and "The Net-Menders", in which the descriptive element is uppermost, have considerable power.

In John Quinn's *Battle Stations* the reactions of a sensitive nature to the realities of several campaigns in the present war are expressed with sincerity and passion, but the thought is rarely original or profound. Here is a poem entitled "Prayer" which illustrates both his merits and his shortcomings:

> God,
> If the night should fall,
> Then let it fall
> Without pain's lurid sunset.
>
> God,
> Should the steel bite,
> Then let it bite
> Sharply. And I unknowing.
>
> God,
> If I must gain it,
> With one blow let me gain it—
> The vast freedom of the grave.
>
> But God,
> Do not let me lie,
> An ugly broken thing. Lie,
> Not dead, not living, bloody in the sun.

The notoriety recently acquired by the publishing firm of Reed and Harris makes it difficult to approach their products with an unprejudiced mind. The task is not made easier by their practice of scrawling their *imprimatur* in long-hand across the title-page, or by the pretentious "Introductory Statements" contributed by members of the school. Harry Roskolenko's *A Second Summary* has "Introductory Statements" by Henry Treece, to whom one of the poems is addressed. Geoffrey Dutton's *Night Flight and Sunrise* has "Introductory Statements" by Max Harris himself, who sees in certain of the poems "a fervency and sensitivity that characterise the best in D. B. Kerr and Ern Malley". Alister Kershaw's *Excellent Stranger* escapes with only a Prefatory Note by A. R. Chisholm. All are provided with the indispensable author's portrait as frontispiece. However, it must be said to the publishers' credit that this series is exceptionally well printed and pleasant to handle.

Harry Roskolenko is probably the best known of the three, at any rate outside Australia. His work is of varying quality—sometimes very ordinary, as in "Hotel Down Under" or "End Voyage", sometimes packed with brilliant phrases obscured by irritating difficulties. He gives at times an impression of great fluency and the poem called "Fantasy", in which he is under no obligation to be explicit, leaves the reader almost satisfied:

> The dog died but the mouth still foamed;
> it was mad, said the mad, sad woman.
>
> Wherefore are the sands still on our beaches,
> the seas still as the fishermen see; the nets
> on the windy trawlers near the coast.
>
> Wherefore are we still on the combing cities
> as announcers tell us there is death so near;
> there is death in man, in city and village.
>
> The dog died but it clawed the air:
> It was sick, said the mad, sad woman.
>
> Wherefore were the thousand volumes drying,
> like scriptures, the fantasies of moral man;
> like the sea itself and the dead valley in it.
>
> Wherefore in the village do the men still sing
> but not with song, for it is not of love:
> It is not anything like that at all.
>
> The dog died, but the dog was mad!
> It was mad, said the mad, sad woman.

Pilot-Officer Geoffrey Dutton is, as Mr. Harris says, "possibly the most European of the younger contemporary writers in this country, but this is all to the good". He finds inspiration in modern English, French and German poets, and in music. Few of his poems are directly concerned with war. "Black Swan" is in his simplest manner:

> Sailing swan, from off this bridge
> You bring me memories of sights I saw
> In dreams and verse. Sinuous grace
> Of Cleopatra in her barge
> Lapped by a liner's monstrous ease.

Look there, out of the water
And waddling up the bank, the queen of the river
A fat black gin in her Sunday clothes.

Alister Kershaw is perhaps the most original of the three. Obsessed with magic as a link between himself and nature, he writes almost entirely in a mystical vein. In "The Triumph" he displays a gift for music:

Now the strange setting of my hand,
A messenger of nerves, has called the Spring,
Made Winter's snare and saved the desolate seasons—
The valorous flowers war across the fields
And set love dancing.

Now by a soft direction of my hand
When all the curious summer strains in quiet,
The comets group their threats and make their truce.

What naked kisses follow on regret?
These oceans gesture to their laughing miles:
My only magic fitly done.

With these three poets the reviewer can only say that he has made an honest attempt to pierce the publishers' camouflage and the authors' obscurity. Where he has succeeded the result has barely justified the effort. He can only hope that the quotations given will encourage others, gifted with greater perspicacity and perhaps with greater patience, to make their own discoveries.

However, Barron Field need not yet turn in his grave. These five volumes are not representative of the best that is being written in Australia today.

G. R. Manton.

PERIODICALS OF PURPOSE

Australian New Writing, Number One (1943), Number Two (1944). Edited by Katharine Susannah Prichard, George Farwell and Bernard Smith. (Current Book Distributors, Sydney. 1s. each.)

A Comment, Number Twenty (July, 1944.) Edited by Cecily Crozier. (Editor, Melbourne. 1s. 6d.)

The editors of both these periodicals announce their aims clearly and, it must be confessed, somewhat naïvely. Artists, they declare, must realise their entanglement in the social and political problems of their day, and they must reflect these problems in their writing, if literature is their field, contributing what they can to a solution. The work in *Australian New Writing* is the more obviously inspired by these ideals, which in themselves are harmless enough; it is with the conception of social and political problems that the editors put forward that one must quarrel. It is too simple a view of modern affairs to consider the present war as the "People's War", not overmuch concerned with "markets and possession"; to imagine that the contestants are either fascist or democratic, and that no impurity of "ideology" mars the aims and methods of either. And the over-simplification in this view of the modern world is matched by a not very profound conception of the function of the artists—"to dedicate themselves to the task of freedom"—and by a weakening of the artistic worth of many of the contributions through a painstaking effort to make every sentence tell against the forces of "fascism" which restrict human "freedom".

It is generally accepted that literature should not aim primarily to convince, or directly to work upon the opinions of, the reader—or, at any rate, should not cause the reader to feel that this is so. Nothing ruins his faith in the artist so much as the sense that he is being preached at, and nothing makes art seem so trivial and superficial as the suspicion that the artist is suppressing some of the facts, seeing life unsteadily and in part, falsifying life as we know it and as we live it in the illusory world of art, in order to make out a case for opinions he wishes to propagate—and this whether we sympathise with those opinions or not. The worst example of this fault is George Farwell's "Discipline" in the first number, a story in which a too high-souled proletariat with "deep-throated approval" surges into the munition works against the lock-out of a too "fascist" management. The author's obvious aim is to counteract the propaganda (plentiful enough) heavily weighted on the other side; but he defeats his purpose by disappointing his reader, who sees all too plainly, and with some resentment, that instead of a work of art, a "story with a moral" has been foisted upon him. The same fault is evident, in some degree, in John Morrison's powerfully-written "Night Shift", and in much of the verse, which on the whole is of disappointing standard.

Other contributors avoid the fault, recognised by Noel Hutton in his critical article "Art and the Working Class", of letting propaganda take precedence over artistic presentation, and present clearly imagined characters is a well-conceived and logically developing story, the social and political problems serving as theme or background. These are all the more vividly brought home to the reader because the author gives them dramatic form, and lets them draw vitality from the life of the characters. By now in Australia, few intelligent readers find it difficult or disconcerting to see these problems treated from the point of view of the working man; but it is a mistake to think that the presentation of that point of view in itself gives added value to a poem or story. No matter what the different outlooks of authors, their work must be judged by the same artistic standards; and *Australian New Writing* can show much writing of good quality.

The stories of Ken Levis are well written, and show a steady development in technique. One, "The Artist's Touch", is written around the social problem of the effect of big business enterprises on workmen in country areas; and the fact that the existence of this problem was accepted without comment by the critics (a fact of which the editors complain in the second number) may as easily prove that the problem is recognised as a matter of course as that it is overlooked; by winning sympathy for a clearly drawn and interesting character, the author has called attention to the social forces with which he has to contend. The other story, "Inbred", is perhaps better than the first; and it is "more important" for that reason, certainly not, as the editors claim, "because it reflects another social tragedy, the subconscious conflict between bush and city dwellers". There are other stories of varying quality by Sarah Maitland, William Hatfield, John Morrison and "Splinter"; there are lively sketches of various phases of life at home, in camps and at the battle-front, by A. P. Gaskell, Alfred Burke, Alan Marshall, E. A. Laurie, Betty Gill, Margaret Trist and James McDonald; and descriptive pieces by C. P. McCausland and E. P. Laurie (about whose identity there seems to be some doubt). Nearly all these contributions are notable for freshness and realism of outlook, racy and vigorous style (over-colloquial and faulty at times), clear and sensitive description, and a straight-forward, confident ring which promises well for the future. The editors are to be commended for opening a new field to Australian talent, and they are justly proud of the range and liveliness of the contributions.

The editor of *A Comment* also insists that artists have always had an "utter dependence on their social context" and that "if they do not come to grips with the problem of the contemporary scene, if they do not attempt to participate in and guide the course of events, they will become merely the mechanical puppetry, despairing appendage of organised vice and brutality". The breeze of youth blows freshly through the journal; its adventurousness, dogmatism and enthusiasm are those of youth, and the maturer contributions are few in number. The issue, following the new editorial policy, opens with an article on the late referendum. At the other end, Cecily Crozier continues a translation of Maupassant's "La Maison Tellier". The verse is varied in standard and style. Members of the Australian English Association who heard Arthur Ashworth's reading of his poem, "A Child's Journey", at an afternoon meeting in 1942, will be glad to find it printed here—an effective and poetically conceived denunciation of modern civilization. Muir Holborn reveals in two poems a flair for phrase, a keen sense of detail, skill in suggestion, and an originality of style here marred by over-ingenuity and obtrusive artifice. There are slighter poems in various modernist styles by Donovan Clarke, Gertrude Sharp, Mary Williams, Gavin Greenlees and Edgar Castle. Over-written and extravagant, the other contributions brightly exploit all the latest methods of torturing language, and probing not very clearly realised psychological states—indicating, so the editor says, "a healthy growth, a vital avant-garde experimentalism". One cannot apply the term "healthy" to Irvine Green's obnoxious scena entitled "The Dead Virgin"; and the vitality in the experiments of Jean Mitchell, M. Dair, Elizabeth Galloway and James Gleeson does not extend to the creation of a finished and compelling work of art. Most of these writers can at times achieve a real distinction of phrase and image; they are not so skilful at articulating a theme. I cannot see how writers will "guide the course of events" or even establish any sympathetic relation with their audience if the latter, reading through highly-rhythmical, densely-packed and emotionally-charged sequences of words, find that their meaning, sought with the best will in the world, is finally indistinguishable.

W. Milgate.

UNPRUNED POETS

Poetry: The Quarterly of Australian and New Zealand Verse. Edited by Flexmore Hudson. Numbers 10 and 11. (Editor, Lucindale, S.A. 1944. 1s. 6d. each.)

As Rex Ingamells points out in his introduction to *Poetry* No. 10, it is a mistake to assume that "the poet is a common phenomenon among us". Certainly it would be unreasonable to expect a verse periodical to be full of good poems four times a year; and it is no depreciation of *Poetry* or of its value to admit that a good deal of the work in these two numbers is undistinguished, though there are quite enough bright spots to repay the reader.

In general, this verse is strongest in descriptive skill and weakest in thought and form—taking "form" to mean internal control rather than external technique. These faults are naturally more obvious in the longer poems, many of which seem to be in an intermediate stage of composition, with moulding and finishing still to be done. The best example of this is Flexmore Hudson's "Our Words Must Burn", which rambles on for nearly two hundred irregular lines on the rather threadbare theme that the poet should deal in propaganda. Many of these lines are lovely in themselves, especially in the opening descriptive passages,

but it would be interesting to see the whole compressed to about twenty lines, preferably in a fairly regular form. It is possible that the result would be a much better and more forceful poem, though it is doubtful whether didactic exhortation—except in the greatest hands—ever rises above the level of good rhetoric. The haranguing habit is a besetting sin with many Australian poets; Rex Ingamells and Ian Mudie are also among the guilty.

Joseph O'Dwyer's dramatic spectacle, "Blossom on the Dawn", also suffers because its length is disproportionate to its intellectual weight. It, too, has fine passages, but on the whole it drags and spreads. The same criticism applies to K. A. Austin's "Australian Warriors"; and Ken Barratt's "On Some Surfers Who Fell in Greece" is obvious in thought and derivative in style.

Donovan Clarke's "Ruin Ridge" is in a different category. There is no diffuseness here: the picture of the desert battlefield is powerful and striking. But when the poet passes on to reflection the reader is again disappointed, for all he says has been said too often before. Delicacy of touch makes R. Kate's "Via the Bridge" one of the more successful descriptive pieces, and Mary Grieg's brief "Song for Summer" has something of the quality of Norma Davis's nature poetry. Jack Sorenson's pictorial "Night March from Cyprus Hill" is marred by an unhappy use of alliteration, but his "Pallid Scars" has something to say.

The general shortage of ideas is betrayed by a sprinkling of poems on the old subject of disillusionment with the world and war, expressed with the too-familiar greyness. Travis Wilson's "Greater Love", A. J. H. Jones's "Leave", Paula Hanger's "Pause for a Cynical Thought", and Laurence Collinson's "Young Men Wait" all belong to this group. Perhaps the last-named should be in a class by itself, for it has far more gusto than the others. When Laurence Collinson states that his soul has been heaved up by the rotted stomach of war, and that in his sad eyes there shine no lights of joy, the adult reader feels a rush of nostalgia for the lost enthusiasm of youth.

But grouping is not a really satisfactory way to consider poetry. With poets whose style is already familiar, it is easier to approach them individually and see whether they run true to form. The two most outstanding poets represented in these numbers are Norma Davis and Kenneth Mackenzie. Kenneth Mackenzie's "Post-Operative" is not as striking as some of his poems, largely because of a certain artificiality imposed by its subject, but it is handled with his distinctive sureness and descriptive power. Norma Davis is represented by "Tasmanian Morning", a landscape painted with all the exquisite precision and spiritual unity that have marked her work as a nature poet. This poem is not in her more common pictorial vein; it stresses rather the mystical aspect of beauty.

> A native bird with a golden summer of sound
> Yellows the silence, and now, ah, now the tree
> Of life is left unguarded. . . .

Very different and much more tangible is the spirit animating Ian Mudie's landscapes in "Homecoming". Here is the familiar sun-baked scenery, always well worth looking at, even if our pleasure is not heightened by the knowledge that our attention will soon be directed to soil-erosion and a vision of the future "big with my people" and "our land's triumphant destiny". Rex Ingamells also fulfils expectations with "The Smile" and "Aeroplane". "The Smile" is in his lighter lyrical vein, in which he is surely more the poet than in his informative, ground-hugging style, of which "Aeroplane", inappropriately enough, is typical.

Almost every poem in these numbers has its good points, and it is impossible to comment on them all, but three more deserve mention for their individuality. These are W. Hart-Smith's "When You Touch", which, though slight, has a refreshing restraint, J. J. Betts's "Poem", and C. R. Allen's "Priest". "Poem" might be termed a railway dirge, and it is curiously effective, especially to a reader familiar with the stretch of line described:

> The gravelled platforms gliding past. . . .
> It is all regret, all regret.

"Priest" is perhaps too personal and consequently obscure, but it has undoubted power:

> Those red dawns flung across the couchant form
> Of that peninsula where sun and storm
> Pursued their antiphon.

These two numbers of *Poetry* continue to maintain the standards established by earlier numbers—the breadth of outlook and sincerity of purpose that give it permanent value to the growth of our literature.

NAN MCDONALD.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Voices: A Quarterly of Poetry, Australian Issue, Edited by Harry Roskolenko and Elisabeth Lambert, Summer, 1944. Published by E. L. Vinal, 73 Main Street, Brattleboro, Vermont, U.S.A. Copy from the E.F.G. Library, Sydney.

Interim, Edited by Wil Stevens and Elizabeth Dewey Stevens, Quarterly, Number One, Summer, Number Two, Fall, 1944. Seattle, U.S..A.

Number Two, 1944: Verse by A. D. Hope, Harry Hooton, and O. M. Somerville. Published by Harry Hooton, 265 Military Road, Cremorne.

Meanjin Papers: A Quarterly of Literature, Edited by C. B. Christesen, Autumn, Winter, Summer, 1944. The Meanjin Press. Box 1871-W, G.P.O., Brisbane.

Poetry: The Quarterly of Australian and New Zealand Verse, Edited by Flexmore Hudson, Number 12, September, 1944. Editor, Lucindale, S.A.

Cadmus: The Poet and the World, by Victor Purcell. Melbourne University Press, 1944.

Some Australian Adventurers, Edited by Enid Moodie Heddle. Longmans, Green and Co. (Melbourne), 1944.

Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1943, Selected by Frank Dalby Davison. Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1944.

In a Convex Mirror, by Rosemary Dobson. Dymock's Book Arcade, 1944.

Poems, by Janet Beaton. The Viking Press, Sydney, 1944.

Earth Cry, by Norma L. Davis. Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1943.

1940-1942, by Nora Kelly. Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1944.

Once These Wings Were Silver, by Major J. H. Paul, A.A.F. Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1943.

New Song in an Old Land: Australian Verse. Chosen by Rex Ingamells. Longmans, Green and Co., 1943.

CORRESPONDENCE

Reed and Harris,
Publishers,
83 Brookman Buildings,
Grenfell Street,
Adelaide, S.A.

AN OPEN LETTER TO *SOUTHERLY*

Dear Mr. Howarth,

I was very interested in your editorial remark, "Large promises would be as much out of place here as would depreciation, direct or indirect, of the achievements of other publications, to which we wish as well as we trust their producers do ours." Of the good faith of this remark I have not the slightest doubt. You will remember that when *New Directions* asked me to produce an anthology of Contemporary Australian poetry for the U.S.A. public I asked your co-operation, and with one or two minor alterations the poems you suggested as best representative of *Southerly* were used. More than one contributor to our journal has written saying the poems were sent on your recommendation. Our journal has always looked forward to the reviews which appear of its work in *Southerly*. I, myself, have published in *Southerly*, and two writers who appeared in the September issue of *Angry Penguins* have been prominent contributors to *Southerly*—Elisabeth Lambert, Muir Holburn. This position is entirely sane. The general orientation of *Angry Penguins* has not been one which would find much favour in the eyes of your critics. Your reviews of our journal have been stringent, critical, and admonishing. That is as it should be. It has enabled us to examine ourselves in the light of a critical viewpoint distinct from our own. That situation has been creative in all respects. The approach from your side has been open-minded and tolerant, yet never other than vigorous and uncompromising.

Such critiques, you will realize, we find all the more salutary at the present moment, when our writers have been subjected to vicious and unreasonable onslaughts from the racegoing public of the Sydney *Sun* and the collective tribe of newspaper minds. I say "vicious and unreasonable" because they emanate from people who have never read our journal, any more than they have ever studied yours closely, I imagine. Additionally *Angry Penguins* has been through the disturbing world of the courts, charged as containing indecent matter. Irrespective of what the court's decision will be, the writers of our journal are artists and with serious artistic intentions. The treatment they receive in the social field is, I believe, not important to them—but the appraisement their work receives from *serious* criticism is vitally important.

It is therefore a matter of great regret to us that the review of our September issue by Joyce Ackroyd seems to embody the *reductio ad absurdum* of small-mindedness, pettiness, and in short, the expression of a personal conglomeration of prejudices rather than intellectual criticism. For one thing the review is sufficiently belated to enable us to have collected critical reactions from all over the world, and to examine it objectively and with an eye more detached and unprejudiced than Miss Ackroyd's.

For instance, Miss Ackroyd sees in it only "stale issues, echoes . . . much that is pretentious, spurious, or merely silly". Nothing more. Not one thing that is not bad. F. J. Tambimuttu, the editor of the outstanding journal *Poetry*,

London, and of Faber's anthology of the war's poetry, says of the same issue, "It is the most progressive literary journal I have seen from Australia and I wish it all success. I was very impressed with the high standard of the poetry and the criticism. . . ." Of course this proves nothing. Miss Ackroyd may well be a more perceptive critic than F. J. Tambimuttu, although none could call him a "hypnotised devotee of the cult of modernism". But for one thing, it does seem improbable that every single contributor is utterly devoid of merit when almost all the contributors are artists respected and published by the other literary journals of Australia. If I do not misread the psychological orientations of Miss Ackroyd, Holburn, Lambert, Christesen and the rest cease to be "poetasters" when their work appears anywhere else than in *Angry Penguins*. If not then you have been as guilty as I of publishing the work of "poetasters".

Miss Ackroyd has not bothered to colour her prejudice with even a veneer of concrete criticism, and is as utterly guilty of the lack of reason for her distastes as she claims Mr. Reed's critique to be.

She writes: "While Max Harris in 'The Bird' and Muir Holburn in 'Poem' lament somebody's spiritual death, Lola van Gooch tries not to grow sentimental over a kiss and in the trifle 'The Clowns and the Birds Twittering' heaves a sigh of ennui." I submit that this is simply cheap and miserable-minded sophistry, and is not criticism. Even if the subject were toothache it is for the critic to comment whether it is a good or a bad poem about toothache. It is possible to sneer about the subject matter of the great bulk of world poetry, about that of *Southerly* indeed, if the aim is to belittle without critical substance to that belittling. Can you see whether they are good or bad poems about "trifles" from the context? I can't. Or does it infer that the "Innocence" lyrics of Blake are bad poetry because they deal with what would be to Miss Ackroyd's mind "trifles"? If Miss Ackroyd believes that "purifying love by reviewing old sorrows" is an idea of utter "slightness" then she must be one of those unfortunates who would regard Milton's "Lycidas" with Nietzschean contemptuousness. She says that "such a theme does not require subtlety in the handling". Surely, in all good sense, *any* theme requires subtlety in the handling if it is to be a good work of art.

Indeed the tone of the article is pretty small-minded when the critic begrudges even her begrudgingness.

Finally, I wish to point out that this letter is asking for no kind of critical softening—the virulent sardonicism of Mr. Hope is preferable to mealy-mouthed prejudice, because his sardonicism reveals at least a body of critical thinking with which one may agree or disagree. I say the same of all your previous critics. We have learnt all we need to learn of Miss Ackroyd's kind of mentality from the people who write letters to the press about "modernism". We simply say that if you desire to keep good faith with your editorial pronouncement you will submit other journals to a tour of definite and reasoned criticism and not the sneering bigotry of omniscience and self-satisfaction.

I have no objection to your allowing Miss Ackroyd to comment upon this letter.

10.9.44. MAX HARRIS.

[Miss Ackroyd's review was in the press before the appearance of the "Ern Malley" number of *Angry Penguins*; publication was unfortunately, but unavoidably, delayed.

The statement quoted by Mr. Harris in the first sentence of his letter was strictly editorial. Reviewers for *Southerly,* of course, express their own opinions, which are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Miss Ackroyd avails herself below of Mr. Harris's willingness that she should comment on his letter.—EDITOR.]

Miss Ackroyd writes:

Samuel Johnson was once very dissatisfied with the reception accorded to a political pamphlet of his. "I think", he said, "I have not been attacked enough for it." At this rate both Mr. Max Harris and I may congratulate ourselves on the success of our respective literary efforts. There is one difference, however, between Mr. Harris's letter and my own review which I should like to point out. This is that I confined myself to comments on the "work" appearing in the magazine in question, and refrained from any reference to "persons"—for, apart from the irrelevance of such reference, being then unacquainted with each and every one of the contributors, I should have felt unqualified to judge of personal qualities. Mr. Harris, on the contrary, has not been so deterred but has not hesitated to mix personal abuse with his critical comments. He accuses me of "small-mindedness" and "pettiness". Apparently, in Mr. Harris's psychology, to form an adverse opinion of his efforts is small-minded and to perceive some discrepancy between the "large promises" made by *Angry Penguins* and the performances of its contributors is petty.

I should like also to correct some slight inaccuracies and misrepresentations in Mr. Harris's letter. According to Mr. Harris, I stated that in the September, 1943, issue of *Angry Penguins* were to be found *only* "stale issues, echoes, much that is pretentious, spurious or merely silly" and *nothing more.* My actual wording was *"mainly* heated disputings over stale issues, some echoes of what has been better done before", etc. It is not quite accurate to state that in this magazine I found "not one thing that was not bad". I spoke of the "competent" writing in the short stories, I did not condemn Elisabeth Lambert's poem, nor, I think, entirely disparage the efforts of Mr. Tallis or Mr. Porter, and I found something to praise in Mr. Dutton's work. In Mr. Harris's own work, however, I am afraid I perceived little of merit. Mr. Harris states that the words "such a theme does not require subtlety in the handling" were applied to his poem "Cathartic", whereas they occurred in the comments on Peter Cowan's "Living". It would appear from Mr. Harris's wording that the phrase "hypnotised devotee of the cult of modernism" is a quotation from my review; this is not so. Finally, it is incorrect that I should elevate to the rank of poets the writers to whom I referred as "poetasters" whenever their work happens to appear in some journal other than *Angry Penguins*; everything would depend on the quality of the work.

Mr. Harris claims to have collected "critical reactions from all over the world". It would have been most impressive if Mr. Harris had quoted from *all* these critical reactions, noting their sources, but he has given only one—by Mr. Tambimuttu—and neglected to inform us whether the others were up to sample.

You claim, Mr. Harris, that you and your contributors are artists and sincere artists. Perhaps you are sincere; indeed, if vehemence indicates sincerity there is no doubt. But as to whether you are artists, not only you but—no matter how much you resent it—others also may be entitled to express an opinion.

THE MacCALLUM MEMORIAL NUMBER

The following appreciation, by Professor A. J. A. Waldock, appeared in *The Union Recorder* on October 19.

Professor Holme would be the last to claim that these writings, collected and arranged by him with such loving care, can do more than give a partial image of the real MacCallum. In a sense no writings can truly represent MacCallum, for what his voice and presence and delivery meant—how these enhanced his written word—only those who heard him can know. It was in listening to him, and especially in listening to him day after day as he developed some ample theme, that one began to take the full measure of his power. One's dominant impression was of complex materials superbly marshalled, of a perfectly controlled, triumphant advance. All this, with the innumerable minor delights of his larger technique—the ease of the transitions, the command of qualification and involved parenthesis, the timing of illustration and aside, even the pleasant ingenuity of those "end-links" (for which one listener, at least, used to wait expectantly) by which he would smooth his passage from writer to writer and connect a whole course of lectures in unbroken sequence—all this we can scarcely expect to feel, except by suggestion, in a group of his shorter writings.

But it is difficult to conceive that, within the limits, a better gathering could have been made, and it is one for which we may be very grateful. There is "Priest Amis", a delightful rendering into delicately-tinted, old-fashioned English prose of a thirteenth century German "Schwank"; there is "Inadmissible Publications", another from a little bundle of what MacCallum called *Nugae Procaces*; there is the public discourse that he delivered before the University and its guests on the occasion of its jubilee in 1902; there is "An Afternoon with George Meredith"; there is "The Making of 'The Tempest'", a self-contained essay, but one that could, and probably did, fit into a larger study of the play; and there are the poems, of which the second may be taken as a testimony of MacCallum's lifelong faith.

This is a memorial number, and MacCallum's own pieces have been presented in a carefully thought out setting. We are given the late Professor Todd's beautifully chiselled memorial record of MacCallum; we have Professor J. T. Wilson's sheaf of memories—extraordinarily interesting as the comment (the last, perhaps, that we shall have) of an equal and a contemporary, the thoughts of one great man upon another; and finally there is Professor Holme's introductory note, binding all together, a note written with the feeling and insight that long years of devotion confer.

The collection will be treasured especially by members of the Australian English Association, of which Sir Mungo MacCallum was Life President, and it is very fitting that it should appear in a special number of *Southerly,* the Association's magazine.

NOTES

Membership of the Association.—Subscriptions are for the calendar year, but it may not be generally known that those who join the Association in or after October of any year are regarded as being financial for the following year.

Junior Members.—The Association admits Junior Members (school pupils and students) at a special subscription of 2s. 6d. a year. This entitles such members to everything except publications.

Members are asked to notify the Hon. Secretary if they do not receive *Southerly* and other publications regularly.

"Southerly", Number One, 1944, *Corrections.*—Page 8, line 6, *"Coflict"*: read *"Conflict"* (the error followed correction of another in the line); page 17, "Promenade", line 8, "be.": read "be" (ditto).

The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature.—L. N. Broughton, in *Modern Language Notes* (U.S.A.), remarks of this compilation that "the attention paid to Australian, New Zealand and Canadian Literature is perfunctory". A glance at the Australian section does not fully bear out his criticism.

G. M. Hopkins Centenary.—1944 is the centenary of Gerard Manley Hopkins' birth. As yet there has been no commemoration.

Hands Across the Sea.—"It was with no little trepidation that we found *Southerly* . . . quoting us in their September (1943) number. We had been rash but had we been ungenerous, unjust, absurd? No, *Southerly* quotes us without resentment, and we re-read ourselves without a blush. [Quotation.] We look forward with an open mind to those forthcoming anthologies."—*Notes and Queries,* May 20, 1944. The subject is Australian poetry.

Chris. Brennan Memorial Fund.—The Fellowship of Australian Writers is appealing for subscriptions to a fund which will provide a memorial over Brennan's grave. Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Secretary, the F.A.W., Box 3448, G.P.O., Sydney.

School's In!—"The 'Reportage School' is the least defined of the present forces in Australian poetry. It operates, I am inclined to think, mainly in a geographical insularity in Sydney and is reflected in the English Association journal *Southerly.* These writers bear somewhat the same relation to the *Angry Penguins* writers that the contributors of 'Chicago Poetry' do to the school of Treece and Tambimuttu in England. There is none of the current preoccupation with Personalism in their writings, sociological reflections permeate their writings, and one can see a vigorous effort on their part to instill personalised and illuminating reaction upon the fields of social experience. . . . Muir Holburn and Elisabeth Lambert are the strongest poets of this type. . . . Imaginative forces no longer dominate through language, and with these writers we are back at the Audenesque vision, but a stripped and disciplined vision."—Max Harris, "Commentary on Australian Poetry", in *Voices: A Quarterly of Poetry,* Australian Issue, edited by Harry Roskolenko and Elisabeth Lambert, Summer, 1944.

Entered for the Ern Malley Stakes.—

Here are the presses and the whirring looms
That disenchant the native brooding air,
The smoking phalluses and clanging wombs
That fashion violence from crude despair.
James McAuley, "Landscape", in *Poetry,* Number Nine.

When trumpetings of jagged shard
announce the eventual theme,
regard those tournaments of hard
bright metal and torn flesh, that seem
to mock the possible façade,
the unknown indefectible dream;
assume them charts of pain, then here
etched by bayonet fear and mere
infrangible credos is the finite vision.

"Damocles" (? Harold Stewart), in *Arna,* 1942.

Unloosen soon your virtue, like the leaves.
Harold Stewart, "Autumn Nakedness", in *Arna,* 1942.

"As Iron Hills."—A new book of verse with this title, by Flexmore Hudson, Editor of *Poetry,* is to be published by Robertson and Mullens, Melbourne.

"Forests of Pan."—Under this title, a selection, made by R. G. Howarth, from the hitherto unreprinted poems in Hugh McCrae's *Satyrs and Sunlight,* 1928, has come from the Meanjin Press. It is available in the bookshops and from C. B. Christesen, Box 1871 W, G.P.O., Brisbane.

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH ASSOCIATION PUBLICATIONS

The following are available:

LEAFLETS (one shilling each).

No. 1. "W. P. Ker." Sir Mungo MacCallum.
No. 2. "Shakespeare." J. W. Mackail.
No. 3. "Browning After a Generation." Sir Mungo MacCallum.
No. 4. "Swinburne's Craftsmanship." Sir Mungo MacCallum.
"Australian Pronunciation." Ruby Board.
No. 5. "Hamlet." Sir Mungo MacCallum.
No. 6. "William Blake." L. H. Allen.
No. 7. "Some Elizabethan Dramatic Manuscripts." R. C. Bald.
No. 8. "William Lisle Bowles." A. J. A. Waldock.
No. 12. "Richard II." J. Le Gay Brereton.
No. 13. "The Poetry of W. B. Yeats." H. M. Green.
No. 14. "George Crabbe." F. G. Phillips.
No. 15. "Scott's Equipment in Attainments and Character for his Literary Work." Sir Mungo MacCallum.
No. 17. "A Midsummer Night's Dream." H. M. Green.
No. 19. "Macbeth." A. J. A. Waldock.

PAMPHLETS (one shilling and sixpence each)

No. 1. "The Tempest." R. G Howarth.
No. 2. "The Pronunciation of English in Australia." A. G. Mitchell.
No. 3. "Julius Caesar." S. Musgrove.

OFFPRINTS (threepence each).

No. 2. "Not Understood." Dorothea Mackellar.
No. 3. "Ulysses." John Anderson.
No. 4. "Transition Periods in English Poetry." Lance Fallaw.
No. 8. "Neil Munro." A. H. Charteris.
No. 9. "Modern English Poetry." Kenneth Slessor.
No. 10. "Unpublished Plays." Carrie Tennant.
No. 12. "The Poetry of Wilfred Owen." H. M. Storey.
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No. 15. "Virginia Woolf." Margot Hentze.
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No. 19. "Dorothy Osborne's Letters." R. M. Crawford.
No. 20. "Australian Literature Society Medallists." Flora Eldershaw.
No. 23. "The English Drama: Is it Dead or Dying?" Leslie Rees.
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"The Poetry of Louis MacNeice." G. R. Manton.
No. iv. "Gerard Manley Hopkins, Greek Scholar and Poet." L. C. R. Smith.
No. v. Annual Dinner, 1941: Summary of Speeches.
No. vi. "Modern American Drama." Thelma Herring.
No. vii. "The School Teacher as Depicted in Literature." G. A. Cantello.
No. viii. "Gertrude Stein." Vere Hole.
"James T. Farrell." W. Maidment.

(Also *Recorder* reports of other Addresses.)

SOUTHERLY.

All numbers (1939-43, one shilling and sixpence each; 1944, two shillings each). Title pages, 1939-40, 1941, 1942, and 1943 volumes (threepence each).

Orders, accompanied by postage (1½d. for each copy) will be taken by the Hon. Secretary or by Miss Herring.